Buddhist Pilgrimage

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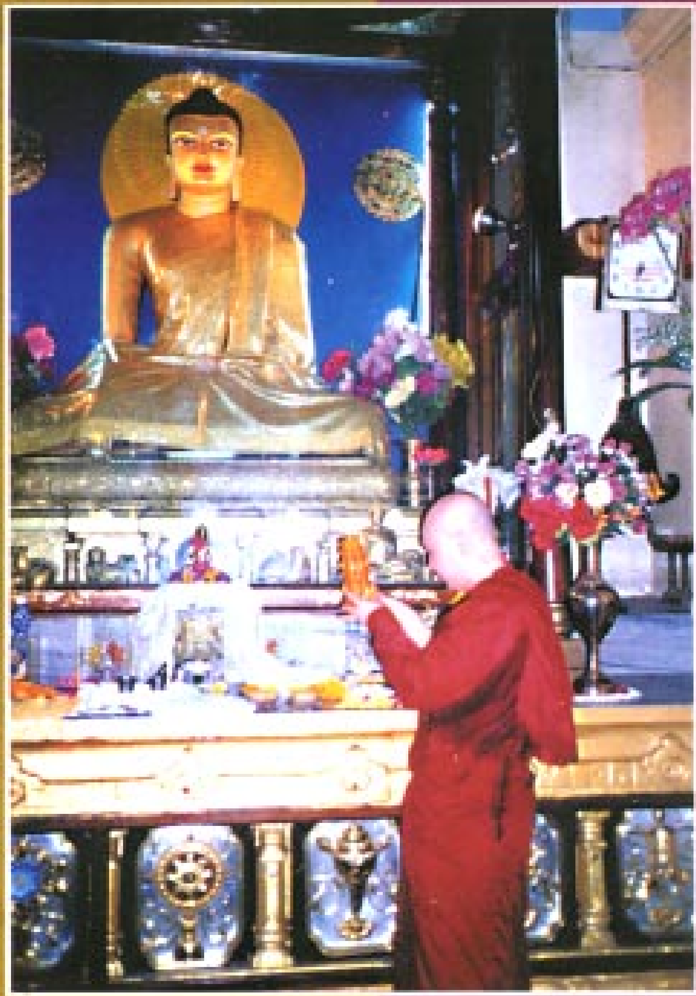
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Sabbadanam dhammadanam jinati –
The gift of Dhamma excels all gifts.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to our spiritual advisors, who accompanied the various pilgrimage groups to India from 1991 to 2001. Their guidance and patience, in helping to create a better understanding of the significance of the pilgrimage in Buddhism, have helped to make those journeys of faith more meaningful and beneficial to all the pilgrims concerned. They are: Venerable Sayadaw U Jnanapurnik of Kathmandu, Nepal; Venerable B. Saranankara Mahathera of Sentul, Kuala Lumpur; Venerable Sayadaw U Rewata of Yangon, Myanmar; and Sister Uppalavanna of Kathmandu, Nepal.

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***Sadhu*! *Sadhu*! *Sadhu*!**

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Preface

OBJECTIVE

The idea of a pilgrimage came from the Buddha himself. Before He passed into *Mahaparinibbana,* the Buddha advised pious disciples to visit four places that may be for their inspiration after He was gone. They are Lumbini, where He was born; Buddhagaya, where He attained Supreme Enlightenment; Deer Park in Sarnath, where He preached the First Sermon; and Kusinara, where He passed into *Mahaparinibbana.* The pious disciple should visit these places and look upon them with feelings of reverence, reflecting on the particular event of the Buddha's life connected with each place. Since the *Mahaparinibbana* of the Buddha, these four shrines of Buddhism have become the focal points for pious disciples to rally around and seek inspiration. By the time of King Asoka, four more places, namely: Savatthi, Sankasia, Rajagaha and Vesali, that were closely associated with the Buddha and scenes of His principal miracles, were added to the pilgrimage itinerary. Together they make the Eight Great Places of pilgrimage.

The aim of this book is to share my experience and knowledge with fellow Buddhists about the benefits of undertaking a pilgrimage to the Eight Great Places with the correct mental attitude. In Buddhism, understanding plays the key role in one's spiritual progress. So, for the intending pilgrim, it is imperative to understand that a pilgrimage is essentially a spiritual journey in veneration of the Blessed One. This act of veneration purifies one's thoughts, speech and action and through it, many noble qualities

can be developed. Part I of this book discusses these mental aspects. A book on Buddhist pilgrimage would not be complete without reference to the famous pilgrims of old, namely: Asoka and the Chinese pilgrims, whose faith and fortitude are an inspiration to all who follow their footsteps. The downfall of Buddhism and the devastation of Buddhist shrines in the 13th century followed by six centuries of oblivion, which was the darkest period of Buddhism, is retold in this book. Finally, the restoration of Buddhist shrines and the revival of Buddhism in India is described to enable the reader to appreciate the efforts of the great men who have dedicated their lives to restore the holy shrines back to their past glory. Parts II & III of this book trace the history and religious significance of each of the Eight Great Places and the objects of interest that can be found there. Part IV provides information on travelling around the Buddhist circuit (as the area is now called), road distances and maps showing the locations of the shrines. A pilgrimage to the Eight Great Places can be one of the happiest and most fulfilling moments of one's life and make one realize how fortunate it is to be able to gaze upon these ancient sacred shrines, with feelings of reverence. It is hoped that this book will be useful to readers who intend to go on a pilgrimage and encourage more Buddhists to undertake a pilgrimage so that they too, can benefit from the journey of piety and faith.

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FORGIVENESS OF FAULTS

During the two weeks or so of the pilgrimage, it is inevitable for many of the pilgrims, including the author, to lapse into moments of heedlessness and commit faults through body, speech or mind against our spiritual advisors or against our fellow pilgrims. On behalf of all the members concerned, the author takes this opportunity to ask for forgiveness from our spiritual advisors and also from each other. If we had been heedless at the holy shrines, we too seek forgiveness from the *Buddha*, *Dhamma* and *Sangha.*

Kāyena vācā cittena – Pamādena maya katam
Accayam khama me bhante – Bhūri pañña tathāgata!

If by deed, speech or thought, heedlessly, we have done wrong,
forgive us, 0 Master! 0 Teacher Most Wise.

REJOICING AND SHARING OF MERITS

May the merits of this *Dhammadana* be shared with relatives, friends and all beings. *Sadhu*! *Sadhu*! *Sadhu*!

Chan Khoon San, Klang, 2001

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a) *Faith and Reverence*

For the majority of Buddhists, going on a **pilgrimage** to the holy places mentioned by the Buddha, is a **once-a-lifetime** undertaking. With so much time, money and effort involved, it behoves the intending pilgrim to truly **understand** what a pilgrimage is all about, especially the **mental aspect**, since the physical part is normally taken care of by a travel company. A pilgrimage is a journey to a sacred place as an act **of devotion and faith**. In the scriptures, faith or ***saddha*** is the professing of **confidence** in and the sense of **assurance** based on **understanding** that one places on the ***Buddha***, ***Dhamma*** and ***Sangha***. It is not the blind belief based on wrong view. As ignorance is the leader of immoral mental states, so ***saddha*** is the **leader** of **moral mental states** because its chief characteristic is the **purification** of the mind.

Thus the pilgrim is not an ordinary **tourist** who travels for the **pleasure** of sightseeing and enjoyment. Unlike sensual delights, the sight of the holy shrines does not arouse **craving** but acts as a condition for **wholesome mental states** to arise in the pilgrim's mind. The Buddha himself advised us to visit those places where he was **born**, where he attained **Enlightenment**, where he preached the **First Sermon** and where he passed away into ***Mahaparinibbana,*** and look upon them with feelings of **reverence**. By showing **veneration** or **reverence** at the holy shrines, one is able to purify one's thought, speech and action. In this way, the pilgrim is endowed with the mor-

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* Throughout this book the blue superscript numbers following headings are linked to the Bibliography, which begins on page 149. To return to your place in the text from a Bibliography entry, click the left arrow in Acrobat's View History Toolbar. **RETURN**

ality of **Right Thought**, **Right Speech** and **Right Action**. So we can see that visiting the places of pilgrimage with the **correct mental attitude** can help us in our practice of the Buddha's Teaching. According to the great commentator, **Ven. Buddhaghosa**, the positive feeling produced by seeing these sites is the **religious excitement** or the sense of urgency they produce. Another commentator, **Ven. Dhammapala**, explained that this sense of urgency means the mind possesses the **knowledge** that one should **shrink** from doing **wrong**, namely, the **knowledge of morality**.

b) *Four Bases of Success*

Like all meritorious actions (*punna kiriya*), the **potency** of one's volition depends on the intensity of the four **bases of success** (*iddhipada*), namely: **desire-to-do** (*chanda*), **mind** (*citta*), **effort** (*viriya*) and **knowledge** (*vimansa*). It is superior, medium or inferior when these four bases are strong, medium or weak respectively. A **strong desire** stems from one's **devotion** to undertake a pilgrimage in order to heed the **Buddha's advice**. When the **mind** or will is strong, it is not easily distracted from its objective, nor discouraged by the rigours of the journey. **Effort** means the energy to undertake the journey, which in olden days meant travelling long distances on land, sea or across desert. Nowadays travelling by plane and air-conditioned bus is easier and faster, but **preparations** are essential, especially finding out the **significance** of each holy shrine. With this **knowledge**, one is able to **associate** each place with a certain event in the **Buddha's life** and form a **mental picture** to condition the arising of **wholesome mental states** when visiting that place. This **success** comes from one's prior **effort** in preparing for the pilgrimage. All these **ingredients** were present in the **hearts** of the **Chinese pilgrims**, Fa Hsien, Hsüan Tsang, I-Ching and many others, when they embarked on their journey to India centuries ago.

c) *Development of the Perfections (Paramis)*

The second aspect of a pilgrimage is that it is also an act of **renunciation** whereby the pilgrim does not crave for luxury but is **contented** with simple, clean accommodation, food and transport. This **non-greed** state of mind enables one to **endure** any discomfort without complaint but with **patience and loving-kindness**. In the course of visiting the sacred places, one feels that one is in the Master's presence and this fullness of **faith** conduces to **joy** and the observance of **morality**, the foundation of all merit. Many pilgrims take the **opportunity** to bring with them requisites to perform ***dana*** out of **reverence** and **gratitude** to the *Sangha,* who take care of the holy places. The holy shrines are also conducive places for pilgrims to reflect on the **Buddha's virtues** and practise **mindfulness** to develop **wisdom**. These are various practices by which one can show **veneration** at the holy shrines or *cetiyas* in addition to the normal acts of **devotion** like the offering of flowers, lights, incense, and worship (*puja*). In the course of the pilgrimage, one can arouse many **wholesome factors** that cause one's volition to become superior and lead to the accumulation of **superior wholesome *kamma***. Indeed, one can develop the **Perfections** (*Paramis)* and earn much **merit** when going on a pilgrimage. But it should not end when one has returned home. After the journey is over, one should always try to recollect the **joyful moments** spent at holy places to keep them vivid in one's memory. Such recollection is **productive of joy** and is a **skillful means** of **re-enforcing** one's good *kamma* already acquired. In times of sickness, fear and worry, or sorrow, one can easily **dispel** these negative mental states by **rejoicing** in one's **wholesome actions** during the pilgrimage.

d) *Buddhist Fellowship*

Fellowship means a community of interest involving regular meetings, the **sharing** of responsibilities and **good friendship** for mutual support. This aspect of Buddhist fellowship is important in order to **encourage and help** one another in the practice of the Buddha's Teachings and **strengthen our faith** in times of trial and tribulation. A pilgrimage in a group to the Eight Great Places is one of the best ways to cultivate **Buddhist fellowship**. Over the two weeks or so of the journey, members of the group will have the opportunity to **interact closely** and get to know each other well under conditions whereby **loving-kindness**, **appreciative joy**, **generosity** and **faith** prevail. The bonds of **comradeship** formed through the performance of **meritorious actions** together will **endure** long after the pilgrimage is over and members will cherish **fond memories** of each other whenever they recollect the happy moments spent at the holy places. A journey to the Eight Great Places with fellow Buddhists united by **faith and piety** is true Buddhist fellowship and a wonderful way of forging **friendship**.

2. *Eight Great Places of Pilgrimage* [2, 3]

In answer to Venerable Ananda's concern that the monks would no longer be able to see the Buddha and pay their respects after His ***Mahaparinibbana***, Lord Buddha mentioned **four places** which a pious disciple should visit and look upon with **feelings of reverence**. What are the four?

a) **Lumbini**: "Here the *Tathagata* was **born**! This, Ananda, is a place that a pious man should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence."
b) **Buddhagaya**: "Here the *Tathagata* became fully enlightened, in unsurpassed, **Supreme Enlightenment!** This, Ananda, is a place that a pious man should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence."
c) **Sarnath**: "Here the *Tathagata* **set rolling** the unexcelled Wheel of the Law! This, Ananda, is a place that a pious man should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence."
d) **Kusinara**: "Here the *Tathagata* **passed away** into *Nibbana* wherein the elements of clinging do not arise! This, Ananda, is a place that a pious man should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence."

> *"And whosoever, Ananda, should die on such a pilgrimage, with his heart established in faith, he at the breaking up of the body, after death, will be reborn in a realm of heavenly happiness."*
>
> *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*

The four other sacred sites are the places sanctified by the Buddha and scenes of **four principal miracles** that He performed, namely:

e) **Savatthi**, where the Buddha performed the Twin Miracle to silence the heretics, after which He ascended to Tavatimsa Heaven to preach to His mother.
f) **Sankasia**, where the Buddha descended from Tavatimsa Heaven accompanied by Brahma and Sakka, after preaching to His mother and the *devas* for three months.
g) **Rajagaha**, where the Buddha tamed the drunken elephant, Nalagiri.
h) **Vesali**, where a band of monkeys dug a pond for the Buddha's use and offered Him a bowl of honey.

Together, they make the eight great places of Buddhist pilgrimage. Of the eight, seven are in **India** while the eighth, the Buddha's birthplace, Lumbini, is in **Nepal**. According to the *Buddhavamsa* Commentary (Pages 188, 428), for all Buddhas there are four places that do not vary or are **unalterable**, namely:

(i) the seat of Enlightenment (*Bodhi pallanka*) at **Bodhgaya**,
(ii) the turning of the wheel of Dhamma in Deer Park, Isipatana at **Sarnath**,
(iii) the placing of the first footstep at the gate of the city of **Sankasia** at the Descent from Heaven,
(iv) the placement of the four legs of the bed in the Perfumed Chamber (*Gandhakuti*) at Jetavana in **Savatthi**.

The four unalterable places of all Buddhas are included in the Eight Great Places of Pilgrimage.

Note: The names of some of the places mentioned in the Pali scriptures are no longer used in India. Their modern names are in parentheses: Buddhagaya (**Bodhgaya**), Kusinara (**Kushinagar**), Rajagaha (**Rajgir**), Savatthi (**Sravasti**) and Vesali (**Vaishali**).

3. *Famous Pilgrims of the Past* [6, 10, 11, 12]

The four sacred places and four places of miracles are known as *Atthamahathanani* or the **Eight Great Places**. **Emperor Asoka** called a visit to these eight shrines *"dhammayatra"* (*dhamma* expedition) or a pilgrimage of piety. On his twentieth regnal year in 249 BC, he heeded the exhortation of the Buddha and embarked on a holy pilgrimage visiting all these places. His pilgrimage was literally a "**landmark**" journey because wherever he went, he built *stupas* and raised pillars with inscriptions to commemorate his visit to these holy places. These towering **monolithic pillars** made of polished sandstone and topped with animal capitals have helped to identify the **exact locations** of the Buddhist world's most sacred places even after they fell into ruins following the downfall of Buddhism in India. Today after 2,250 years, many of these Asokan pillars still stand proclaiming his **faith** and **devotion**. Modern day pilgrims can still see these Asokan pillars in Lumbini, Kapilavatthu and Vesali, the famous Lion Capital at Sarnath Museum and the Elephant Capital at Sankasia. Asoka's example was emulated by succeeding Buddhist kings, queens, nobles and wealthy men and women. As a result, India became studded with Buddhist monuments and shrines.

From China came the **devout** and **earnest** Buddhist monks, like **Fa Hsien**, **Hsüan Tsang** and many others, who travelled great distances braving immense hardships, perils, and even death to fulfill their desire to visit the holy places. In the **Kao-seng-chuan** (Chinese Monks in India, by I-Ching), another pilgrim, **I-Ching**, described how he had to pass many days without food, even without a drop of water and wondered how the other travellers, under such difficult conditions, could keep up their morale and spirit.

On the long, long trek, many **died** from sheer physical exhaustion or sickness and some had to leave their **bones in desert-sands** or somewhere out in India. Yet, in spite of these difficulties, they never faltered nor wavered, such was their **indomitable spirit** and desire to gaze on the sacred vestiges of their religion. Never did men endure greater suffering by **desert**, **mountain** and **sea** and exhibit such **courage**, **religious devotion** and **powers of endurance!**

The pioneer among them was **Fa Hsien**. He took five years to walk from the Western border of China across the Takla Makan desert, one of the most hostile environments on this planet, and over the windswept passes of the Pamir and Hindu Kush mountain ranges to Northern India. After spending six years in India, he sailed to Sri Lanka, where he spent two more years. His homeward journey by sea took another year in which he stopped for five months in Java. Fa Hsien left an account of his journey of **399-414 AD** in the **Fo-kwo-ki** (Record of the Buddhist Country). One hundred years after Fa Hsien, two monks, **Sung Yun** and **Hui Sheng** of Loyang (Honan-fu), were sent by the Empress of the Northern Wei dynasty to obtain Buddhist books from India. They started out in **518 AD** and after reaching as far as Peshawar and Nagarahara (Jalalabad), returned to China in **521 AD**. Sung Yun left a short narrative of his travels but Hui Sheng did not record any details of the journey.

Undoubtedly the most renowned Chinese pilgrim was the great Tipitaka master, **Hsüan Tsang**, who secretly set out on the long journey to the West in 629 AD at the age of twenty-seven. His travel in India was the most extensive, taking almost seventeen years (**629-645 AD**) and when he returned to China, he was given a great ovation and public honour by the T'ang Emperor, T'ai Tsung. Hsüan Tsang's record of his travels, known as **Si-yü-ki** (Record of the Western World), is a detailed and romantic account

of the Buddhist shrines in India and other countries he passed through. His devotion, piety and love for learning became a source of inspiration to his contemporaries and later generation of pilgrims including **I-Ching**, who took the sea route to India and back. His travels covered the period **671-695 AD** in which he spent ten years studying in Nalanda and another ten years in Srivijaya, Sumatra translating the scriptures. He wrote his account in the **Nan-hai-ki-kuei-nai-fachuan** (Record of the Inner Law sent home from the South Sea).

The records of the **Chinese pilgrims** are the only available writings describing the **condition** of Buddhism and the Buddhist sites as they existed at that time and have proven to be **invaluable** in locating their **ruins** during excavations in the 19th century by **Sir Alexander Cunningham** and others.

4. *Record of the Buddhist Country by Fa Hsien*

Fa Hsien went to India with some fellow monks, namely: Hui-king, Tao-ching, Hui-ying, Hui-yu and others, for the purpose of seeking the *Vinaya* or **Monastic Rules**. Starting from **Ch'ang-an** (Xian) in 399 AD, they travelled by stages on foot till they reached **Chang-yeh**, a military station at the north-west extremity of the Great Wall, where they met another party of Chinese monks led by Pao-yun and Sung-king, also on their way to India. After spending the rainy season together in Chang-yeh, they pressed on to **Dunhuang** at the edge of the Takla Makan desert, where they stopped for over a month. The local prefect provided them with the necessities to cross the desert and Fa Hsien's party started out first on their long trek across the **Takla Makan** desert. Walking for seventeen days about 1,500 li (1 li = 1 mile) in a south-westerly direction, keeping to the edge of the desert, they reached the rugged and barren country of **Shen-shen** (Loulan), south of **Lop Nor**. The king of this country honoured the Buddhist religion and there were some 4,000 monks, belonging to the Small Vehicle or *Hinayana*[1]. After resting there for about a month, they travelled

1 One hundred years after the Buddha's *Parinibbana*, the Second Buddhist Council was held at Vesali to discuss the Ten Points practised by the Vajjian monks. Although the Ten Points were ruled to be unlawful by the Council, the Vajjian monks did not accept the verdict. This resulted in a schism in the *Sangha* and the secession of the *Mahasanghika* (Vajjian monks), believed to be the forerunners of the *Mahayana*. From then on further schisms led to the formation of different sub-sects until eighteen schools of Buddhism arose. The name *Hinayana* was applied to these schools by the followers of the *Mahayana* tradition, which developed sometime immediately prior to the Christian era. The name reflected the *Mahayanists* evaluation of their own tradition as a superior method, surpassing the conservative schools in universality and compassion. This name, however, was not accepted by the conservative schools who considered it as degrading. The modern upholders of the ancient *Hinayana* tradition are the *Theravadins* (followers of the Way of the Elders), who are but one of the eighteen ancient schools.

north-west for fifteen days, probably following the course of the **Tarim** river, and arrived at the country of **Kara-shahr** (Korla), near the lake **Bagarach**.

There, they met again the party of monks led by **Pao-yun**, who had travelled by the northern route to **Hami** and **Turfan**. While Fa Hsien's group remained at Kara-shahr under the protection of an important official, Pao-yun's group were not so lucky and they had to return to Turfan to procure the necessities for their journey. After staying in Kara-shahr for two months, Fa Hsien and his company continued their journey south-west across the desert. On the road, there were no dwellings or people. The **sufferings** of their journey on account of the difficulties of the road and rivers **exceeded human comparison**. They were on the road for a month and five days before they reached the prosperous, oasis town of **Khotan**. The ruler of the country provided them with accommodation in a monastery where they stayed for three months and were able to witness the **grand procession** of images, which began on the first day of the fourth month and lasted for fourteen days.

From Khotan, the pilgrims spent twenty-five days on the road to **Yarkand**, where they stopped for fifteen days before continuing their journey. After another twenty-five days of walking, they arrived at **Kashgar**, in the middle of the **Tsung-ling** range (**Pamirs**), in time to witness the ***Pancavassika Parisa*** or **Quinquennial assembly**, a five-yearly event instituted by **King Asoka**, in which the ruler made a great offering to the *Sangha*. Leaving Kashgar, they entered **Tajikistan** through the **Sarykol** range, taking a month to cross the **Pamir** mountains, and continued their journey south-west for fifteen days over a difficult, precipitous and dangerous road. Fa Hsien described it thus:

"The mountain side is simply a stone wall standing up 10,000 feet. Looking down, the sight is confused and there is no sure foothold. Below is a river called ***Sint'u-ho (Indus)****. In old days, men had cut away the rocks to make a way down and spread out side ladders, of which there are 700 steps to pass. When these are negotiated, the river is crossed by a hanging rope bridge. The two banks of the river are something less than 80 paces apart."*

After crossing the river, they arrived at the country of **Udyana**, which comprises the regions from **Chitral** to **Swat** in present day **Northern Pakistan**. It was then a **flourishing centre** of Buddhism, with five hundred monasteries belonging to the Small Vehicle. Three of the pilgrims, Hui-king, Tao-ching and Hui Yu went on ahead to **Nagarahara** (Jalalabad) to pay reverence to the Buddha-shadow[2] at the Gopala Naga cave and the tooth and skull bone relics at **Hadda** while Fa Hsien and Hui Ying remained at Udyana to spend the rains-retreat. When this was over, they journeyed south to **Swat** and descending eastward for five days arrived at **Gandhara** (region between Takkasila and modern day Charsadda). From there, they travelled south to **Peshawar** to see the famed ***stupa*** **of Kaniska** and the **alms-bowl** relic. Here they met the party of Pao-yun and Sung-king who had come to pay homage to the alms-bowl relic. One of Fa Hsien's friends, **Hui-yu**, who had previously gone to Nagarahara also came to Peshawar

2 According to a popular legend among the Chinese pilgrims, the Buddha left his shadow in a cave on the mountainside in Nagarahara (old capital of the Jalalabad district). This cavern was the abode of a destructive dragon, Naga Gopala, who was planning to destroy the kingdom for a slight offence against him when he was a shepherd in a former life. Out of compassion for the inhabitants, the Buddha came to Nagarahara from mid India and after taming the dragon, left his shadow on the wall of the Naga Gopala cave. The Buddha advised the dragon to look at his shadow whenever evil intentions arose in his mind and by its power of love and virtue, the evil purpose would be stopped. In later days, the shadow was not visible any more.

and at this point, he decided to **return to China** with Pao-yun and Sung-king. Meanwhile Fa Hsien's companion, **Hui-ying**, dwelling in the temple of the alms-bowl relic, **died** there.

Fa Hsien now proceeded alone westward to Nagarahara. On the borders, in the city of **Hadda**, he visited the *vihara* of the **Buddha's skull-bone**. At the capital of **Nagarahara**, he visited the *viharas* of the Buddha's **religious staff** and ***sanghati*** (outer robe) and the Gopala Naga cave to pay homage to the Buddha shadow. He teamed up with his two remaining companions, Tao-ching and Hui-king and together they spent two months of winter there. When winter was over, they proceeded south and encountered great difficulties and extreme cold crossing the **Safed Koh** mountain range. **Hui-king**, barely recovering from an earlier illness, was unable to proceed onwards. He **died of exhaustion** in Fa Hsien's arms, urging them to press on lest they too perished. With great effort, the surviving pilgrims crossed the mountain range and entered **Afghanistan** where they spent the rains-retreat in the company of 3,000 monks in the vicinity.

After the rains-retreat they crossed the Punjab, where they saw the Buddhist religion **flourishing** and after passing many monasteries with myraids of monks, the pilgrims reached **Mathura** country. Fa Hsien then visited in succession **Sankasia**, **Kanauj**, **Saketa** or **Ayodha** and **Savatthi**, where the monks at Jetavana monastery were astonished to see them, for they had not seen men from **Han** (Chinese) come so far as this before in search of the Buddha's law. Moving eastward, they travelled to the ancient **Sakyan** kingdom, where they visited the birthplaces of **Kakusandha** Buddha and **Kanakagamana** Buddha and saw the **Asokan pillars** erected there. The capital, **Kapilavatthu**, was like a great desert, without any inhabitants. There were only a congregation of monks and about ten

families of lay people. The roads were devoid of travellers for fear of wild elephants and lions.

From Kapilavatthu, the pilgrims travelled to **Kusinara**, scene of the Buddha's *Mahaparinibbana.* In this city too, there were few inhabitants and such families as were there, were connected with the congregation of monks. Moving onwards, they went to **Vesali** and **Pataliputta**, the capital of ancient **Magadha**. From there, they moved on to **Nalanda** and **Rajagaha**, where Fa Hsien ascended **Gijjhakuta** hill and after offering flowers, incense and lights, remained there the whole night contemplating and reciting the suttas. Continuing the pilgrimage, they went to **Buddhagaya**, scene of the Buddha's Enlightenment, Deer Park at **Sarnath** where the Buddha preached the **First Sermon**, **Varanasi** and lastly **Kosambi** in Allahabad district, where they visited the ruins of **Ghositarama** monastery. Returning to Pataliputta, **Tao-ching** decided to take up **permanent residence** in India after seeing the strict decorum observed by the monks in India with regard to the Disciplinary rules compared with the meagre character of the precepts known in China.

For Fa Hsien, the purpose of his sojourn was to seek copies of the **Monastic Rules** to take home but throughout the journey, he was unable to obtain a single copy as the rules were **transmitted orally**. Here he was able to obtain a copy used by the **Mahasanghikas** at Jetavana monastery. Fa Hsien spent three years learning Sanskrit and copying out the Rules. Then following the course of the **Ganges** river in an easterly direction, he travelled to **Tamralipti** (modern Tamluk in West Bengal), where he spent a further two years copying the sacred texts and drawing image pictures. From the port of Tamralipti, he took a ship to **Sri Lanka** where he spent

two more years collecting and copying the Buddhist texts including the **Mahisasaka** monastic rules, unknown in China.

Fa Hsien had been away from his homeland for many years. Of the **four monks** who accompanied him to India, **one returned** to China after going only as far as Peshawar, **two died** in India and one **remained behind** in India. At the **Abhayagiri** monastery in **Anuradhapura**, the sight of a merchant making a religious offering of a white silk fan from China, made him feel sad and homesick. Having completed his original purpose of obtaining the knowledge of the precepts to spread throughout the land of Han, he decided to return home. In his voyage home **by sea**, he had several miraculous escapes. His ship sprung a leak during a violent storm and was driven to the island of Java, where he spent five months. He took another boat bound for **Canton** but after a month and some days, he encountered another storm that drove the boat off course and landed on the shores of the **Shantung Peninsula** instead. Yet in spite of all the perils of the sea, he had managed to return home safely with his precious cargo of the sacred texts intact.

After resting at **Tsing-Chow** for the summer, he proceeded to **Nanking** where he exhibited the sacred books he had brought back. He was away **fourteen years** and had encountered **great hardships** and **dangers** in his travels through nearly **thirty different countries**. Having been protected by the power of the **Triple Gem** and delivered safely from all dangers, he desired to share his experiences with readers by writing these **records** of his travels from 399-414AD. He died at the age of **eighty-six** after having accomplished his mission of translating into Chinese the Buddhist texts, which he had taken so much time and trouble to bring back from India.

5. *Record of the Western World by Hsüan Tsang*

The T'ang Dynasty Record of the Western World is an **objective record** composed in twelve books by the famous Chinese pilgrim **Hsüan Tsang** about his epic journey from China to **Central Asia** and the **Indian Sub-Continent** and back in 629-645 AD. It should not be confused with the popular **Chinese fiction** Si-yü-ki or Travels to the West featuring the adventures of the mythical **Monkey God**, which have been made into films and TV shows for entertainment.

While **Fa Hsien** went to India to seek the ***Vinaya*** or Monastic Rules, **Hsüan Tsang's** purpose of going to India was to learn from the wise men there on the **points of doctrine** that were troubling his mind. When his application to leave China was refused by the authorities, he departed in **secret** from **Chang'an** (Xian) in 629 AD at the age of twenty-seven. Heading up the **Gansu** corridor, he passed **Lanzhou** and worked his way to the end of the Great Wall near **Dunhuang**. There he took the northern branch of the **Silk route** passing through Yumen Guan (Jade Gate Pass) and after crossing the **Gobi** desert, arrived at **Hami**. There, he was summoned to **Turfan**, the capital of the **Uighur** country, by its pious Buddhist ruler to become the country's chief priest, which Hsüan Tsang declined. After failing in his attempt to detain Hsüan Tsang, he remitted the pilgrim to **Kara-shahr**, from which he advanced to **Kucha**.

Kucha was an oasis town on the edge of the desert, famous for its excellent horses. The ground was rich in minerals and its soil was suitable for agriculture. It had one hundred monasteries with over

five thousand Sarvastivadin monks. All the monasteries had highly adorned images of the Buddha, which were paraded on special occasions in a procession of idol-carriages. In Kucha, the king observed the **Quinquennial Assembly**, originally instituted by **King Asoka**, whereby a great offering was made to the *Sangha* every five years. Outside the main city gate, Hsüan Tsang saw two erect figures of the Buddha, about 90 feet tall, and in front of them was a place erected specially for this festival. After staying here for two months, he continued his journey to **Aksu** and crossing the snowy **Tian Shan** mountains, reached the shores of lake **Issyk Kul** in **Kyrgyzstan**. This mountain lake, 5,200 feet above sea level, is the second largest in the world covering an area of 6,200 sq. km.

He then proceeded north-west along the fertile valley of the **Chu river** passing the Kyrgyz lake-land area of **Myn-bulak**, known as the "**Thousand springs**". Moving westward, he passed the Tartar town of **Taras** and the country of **Nujkend** on the **Chatkal range**, and arrived at **Tashkent** in **Eastern Uzbekistan**, which was then under the control of the **Tuh-kiueh** (Huns or Eastern Turks). The next stop was **Samarkand**, a very populous country located at the junction of the trade routes between China and India. It was the emporium of the Silk route where the merchants bartered their goods, and according to Hsüan Tsang,

> *"The precious merchandise of many countries is stored up here. Its inhabitants are skilful in the arts and trades beyond those of other countries. The people are brave and energetic and are copied by all surrounding people in point of politeness and propriety."*

From Samarkand, the pilgrim proceeded to **Kesh** (Karshi) and moving south, entered the mountains. After climbing the steep

and precipitous road, he arrived at the **Iron Gate**, a mountain pass bordered on both sides by very high rocky walls with an iron colour. Here double wooden doors had been erected and many bells were fixed on them. The doors were strengthened with iron and impregnable. Because of the protection afforded to the pass when these doors were closed, the pass was called Iron Gate. Passing Iron Gate, he reached **Tukhara**, a country controlled by the Turks and crossing the **Oxus** river (Amu Darya) near **Termez**, arrived at **Kunduz** in Afghanistan. Here he met the eldest son of the Turkish Khan, brother-in-law of the king of Turfan, from whom Hsüan Tsang had letters of recommendation. After some delay, he proceeded with some monks from **Balkh** to that city, formerly capital of the Bactrian kingdom of **Milinda**. It had about a hundred monasteries and three thousand monks.

After paying reverence to the sacred relics, he departed from Balkh and made the difficult and dangerous journey across the **Hindu Kush** mountains to **Bamiyan**. Here the people worshipped the Triple Gem but still maintained a hundred tutelary deities, which the merchants sought to propitiate when business was bad. There were ten monasteries with about a thousand monks of the Lokuttaravadin school. Hsüan Tsang saw the two **colossal Buddha images**, about 55 and 35 metres tall, carved out of a mountainside in the 4^{th} and 5^{th} centuries AD, and mistook the smaller one to be bronze due to its gilded surface. He also saw a large reclining Buddha image and paid reverence to some tooth relics. (**Note**: In an act of **religious bigotry**, the fanatical Talibans of Afghanistan destroyed the ancient Buddha images in 2001, despite worldwide protests and condemnations.)

Moving eastward, Hsüan Tsang entered the passes of the Hindu Kush and crossing the **Siah Koh** ridge, arrived at the country of

Kapisa. It had one about hundred monasteries with six thousand Mahayana monks and a great monastery with three hundred monks of the Small Vehicle. There were also some ten *Deva* temples with about a thousand Hindu ascetics of various sects, such as naked ascetics (*Digambaras*), those who covered their bodies with ashes (*Pasupatas*) and those who wore chaplets of bones on their heads (*Kapaladharinas*). Every year, the king would make a silver image of the Buddha and offer alms to the poor, destitute and bereaved in his kingdom. After spending the summer of 630 AD in Kapisa, Hsüan Tsang went to **Nagarahara** (Jalalabad). Here he found many monasteries but few monks. The *stupas* were desolate and ruined. He visited the famous **Naga Gopala** cave, which according to legend, once contained the shadow left by the Buddha after he had tamed the *naga* (serpent). At the *vihara* of the skull-bone relic, he found that the caretakers were Brahmans appointed by the king and they charged the worshippers a fee in order to see the relic.

From Nagarahara, the pilgrim entered **Gandhara** by the **Khyber Pass**. Here he found the towns and villages deserted with few inhabitants. There were about a thousand monasteries, which were in **ruins**, overgrown with wild shrubs and empty. The *stupas* were mostly **decayed**. At the capital, **Purushapura** (Peshawar), there was only one monastery with fifty Mahayana monks. However, the ***Deva*** temples numbering about one hundred were fully occupied with heretics. According to Hsüan Tsang,

> *"Centuries ago, there was a treacherous Hun king from Sakala named **Mahirakula**, who killed his benefactor, the king of Kashmir and usurped the throne. Then he came to Gandhara and killed its ruler in an ambush. He exterminated the royal family and the chief minister, overthrew the*

stupas and destroyed the monasteries, altogether one thousand six hundred foundations."

Travelling north, the pilgrim arrived at **Udyana**, a flourishing centre of Buddhism during the time of Fa Hsien. But now, all its one thousand four hundred olden monasteries lay waste and desolate. Formerly, there were some eighteen thousand monks but now there were very few. After visiting the shrines, he continued his journey to **Takkasila** (near Rawalpindi). Here again, he saw the aftermath of the **devastation** by the Hun king Mahirakula – many monasteries destroyed and deserted. From Takkasila, he went to **Kashmir** where Buddhism still prevailed. There were still a hundred monasteries and five thousand monks. It appeared that after the death of Mahirakula, his descendants, who then ruled Kashmir, atoned for his misdeeds by erecting *stupas* and monasteries for the Buddhists. At the capital **Srinagar**, Hsüan Tsang spent two years (631-633 AD) studying philosophy and copying the scriptures under a Mahayanist teacher.

From Kashmir, the pilgrim travelled south passing **Jammu** and reached **Sakala** (Sialkot near Lahore), the seat of the Bactrian king Milinda of old and of the infamous Mahirakula of late. As he was leaving Sakala, he was robbed by brigands and spent the night in a neighbouring village. Moving on, he reached a large town, probably **Lahore**, where he remained for a month. Then he went to stay a year in **Chinapati**. In 634 AD, he travelled to **Jalandhar** and reaching the **Sutlej** river, passed **Satadru** and **Paryartra** before arriving at **Mathura**. Along the way, he could see the **decline of Buddhism** and the rise of **neo-Brahmanism** of the Gupta age. Mathura, a stronghold of Buddhism during the time of King Asoka and centre of the Sarvastavadin school under the famous monk **Upagupta**, was now a shadow of its past, with only twenty monasteries and

two thousand monks. After visiting the local shrines, the pilgrim ascended the **Yamuna** river to **Kuru-kshetra** (Thaneswar), the holy land of the Hindus and scene of the legendary **Mahabharata** wars between the Pandava brothers and the Kauravas, cousins as well as bitter rivals. There were only three monasteries with about seven hundred monks but one hundred *Deva* temples with great numbers of various sectarians.

Travelling east, he reached the **Ganges** and following its downward course, passed several towns where he noted the **rising tide** of **Brahmanism**. He visited **Sankasia** and saw the shrines associated with the Buddha's descent from Heaven. Next he went to **Kanauj** also known as **Kanyakubja**, i.e., "city of the hump-backed women", which King **Harsha Vardhana** had made his capital. He did not meet the king, who was away, but who later became his friend and patron. From Kanauj, he went to **Ayodha** or **Saketa**, where the Mahayanist teacher **Vasubhandu** composed his *sastras* or treatises and reaching the confluence of the Ganges and Yamuna rivers, arrived at **Prayag** (Allahabad). There were two monasteries with few followers but many *Deva* temples with great numbers of sectarians. At the confluence of the two rivers, Hsüan Tsang saw hundreds of Hindu devotees **drowning** themselves in the waters after **fasting** for seven days, in the belief that this would **wash away** their sins and lead them to heaven. He went to **Kosambi** and visited **Ghositarama**, now an old habitation in ruins, which the rich merchant Ghosita had built for the Buddha to stay in whenever he was in Kosambi.

Moving northwards, the pilgrim travelled to **Sravasti** and visited **Maheth**, where he saw the **Sudatta stupa** marking the site of Anathapindika's house and beside it the **Angulimala stupa**. At **Saheth**, he found **Jetavana** in ruins and deserted. From Sravasti,

he went to **Kapilavastu**, capital of the old Sakyan kingdom; **Lumbini**, birthplace of the Buddha; **Ramagama**, which had been waste and desolate for many years; and **Kusinara**, scene of the Buddha's *Mahaparinibbana*. Travelling south 500 li, through a great forest, he reached **Varanasi**, the sacred city of the Hindus. There were about thirty monasteries with three thousand monks but over a hundred *Deva* temples with about ten thousand sectarians, mostly **Siva** worshippers. At the **Deer Park** in **Sarnath**, he visited a monastery with fifteen hundred monks of the Sammitiya school and paid reverence at the shrines in the vicinity. Following the course of the Ganges eastward to **Ghazipur**, then north east, he arrived at the city of **Vesali**. There were several hundred monasteries, which were mostly dilapidated with very few monks. The city was in **ruins** and practically deserted. He saw the **Asokan pillar** with a lion capital on top and beside it, the ***stupa*** built by King Asoka. Near the pillar was a **pond** dug by a **band of monkeys** for the Buddha's use and further south was a ***stupa*** marking the spot where the monkeys, taking the Buddha's bowl, climbed a tree and gathered him some **honey**. Travelling north-west, he passed the **Vajjian** country and went to **Nepal**. Then returning to **Vesali** and crossing the Ganges, he arrived at the country of **Magadha**.

Pataliputta (Patna), capital of the great **Mauryan** empire during the time of King Asoka, was in decay. There were fifty monasteries with about ten thousand monks, the majority being Mahayanists. In the old city, Hsüan Tsang saw hundreds of monasteries, *Deva* temples and *stupas* lying in ruins. He also visited **Kukkutarama** monastery built by Asoka, but the building had long been in ruins and only the foundation walls remained. Travelling south, he passed the **Tiladaka** *vihara* where learned men and scholars from different countries came to study. Inside one building, he

saw images of **Tara** and **Avalokitesvara** beside an erect image of the Buddha, an indication of the growing influence of **Tantrism**. Moving on he reached the **Neranjara** river and crossing it, arrived at **Gaya**. Here he visited **Pragbodhi** where the *Bodhisatta* underwent six years' austerities, **Sujata's** village, **Uruvela** forest and **Bodhgaya**, scene of Buddha's **Enlightenment** and holiest spot to all Buddhists. Then he went to **Rajagaha** where he visited all the sacred shrines, including **Vulture Peak**, **Bamboo Grove**, the **hot springs**, **Pippala** stone house and **Sattapanni** caves, venue of the **First Buddhist Council**.

He was in **Nalanda** around 635 AD and enrolled at the famous **Nalanda University**, India's premier Buddhist seat of learning, to fulfill his **purpose** of coming to India and learn from the wise men about Buddhism. **Admission** was based on **merit** in which the gatekeeper, a responsible officer of considerable learning, would ask some difficult questions and the candidate had to answer them to his satisfaction. Normally, out of ten candidates, **seven or eight** would **fail** this screening test. Hsüan Tsang, who already had a solid grounding of scholarship, was able to gain admission into the University. Here he studied **Yogacara** philosophy under the famous Mahayanist teacher **Silabhadra**. He also studied **Hindu philosophy** and mastered the **Sanskrit** language. During his residence in Nalanda, he **distinguished** himself by his diligence and scholarship.

In 638 AD he interrupted his studies and travelled to **Champa** (Bhagalpur) and **West Bengal**, ending up at **Tamralipti**, where he intended to take ship to **Sri Lanka** and study the **Theravada** doctrine. There he was told that the island was within easy reach of South India. So he decided to travel by land rather than take the risk of a long sea voyage. Moving in a south-westerly direc-

tion he passed **Orissa** state, which had some hundred monasteries with ten thousand Mahayanist monks, and **Kalinga** where the heretics, mostly Niganthas predominated. Then continuing the journey through **Kosala** (the land of **Nagarjuna**, founder of the **Madhyamika** doctrine) and **Andhra**, he reached **Amaravati**. There were numerous monasteries but they were deserted and ruined. Of those preserved, there were about twenty with a thousand monks of the Mahayana tradition. He saw two establishments situated on two cliffs, one in the east called **Purvasaila** (East cliff), and the other on the west called **Aparasaila** (West cliff). Both used to be inhabited by monks but were now deserted and wild. After spending the rainy season of 639 AD in Amaravati, the pilgrim proceeded south passing the country of **Chola**, which he described as

> *"…wild and deserted, a succession of marshes and jungle, with a small population and troops of brigands go through the country openly".*

Then, continuing south through a wild forest district and travelling 1,500 li, he arrived at the country of **Dravida**.

At the capital **Kanchipuram** (near Madras), there were about a hundred monasteries with ten thousand Mahayanist monks. Here he learned that **Sri Lanka** was facing unrest and famine following the death of its ruler. So he gave up the idea of going to the island. Moving northwards, he entered a forest and passed many deserted villages where brigands roamed in search of victims. After travelling 2,000 li without incident, the pilgrim arrived at **Konkanapura** (Golconda near Hyderabad), which had about a hundred monasteries with ten thousand monks from both traditions. From Konkanapura, he crossed a wild country, infested with wild beasts and robbers, and arrived safely in the state of **Maharashtra**, where

he visited the famous rock-cut cave monasteries or *lenas* at **Ajanta**. From Ajanta, he travelled to **Valabhi** around 641 AD passing **Bharoch**, **Malava** and **Kachha**. **Valabhi** was the capital of the **Maitraka** kingdom in **Gujerat** and a famous centre of learning and commerce. According to Hsüan Tsang:

> *"There were about a hundred families who possess a hundred lakhs (millionaires). The rare and valuable products of some distant regions are stored here in great quantities."*

He visited a great monastery where two distinguished Mahayana masters, **Sthiramati** and **Gunamati** had resided and composed their treatises. Moving west, he passed **Surashtra** and **Gurjjara** before arriving at **Ujjain**, the capital of **Avanti**. There were scores of monasteries but they were mostly in ruins and only three hundred monks remained. Moving west, he travelled to **Sindh** where he saw several hundred monasteries occupied by some ten thousand monks of the Sammatiya school. Then moving north and crossing the **Indus** river, he arrived at **Multan**. Here the believers and monks were few. There were ten monasteries, all in ruins. At this point, he decided to return to **Nalanda** as he had visited most of the Buddhist shrines in India.

Back at Nalanda, Hsüan Tsang devoted his time fully to the study of the Mahayana doctrines and participated in philosophical debates. After acquiring an encyclopedic learning, he was looking forward to returning to China and spreading the new learning. The king of **Assam**, **Kumara-raja**, heard about the Chinese master's ability and invited him to the capital **Kamarupa** in 643 AD. While Hsüan Tsang was there, Kumara-raja received an order from his overlord, King **Harsha Vardhana**, to bring the Chinese monk to see him at **Kajinghara**, a small kingdom on the banks

of the Ganges. At the meeting, both men established a close relationship. Harsha Vardhana invited Hsüan Tsang to his capital at **Kanauj** where he convoked a **religious assembly** on the banks of the Ganges, attended by the kings of twenty vassal states, together with monks and Brahmans. Hsüan Tsang was appointed '**Lord of the Discussion**'. For the next three weeks, Harsha would offer food to the monks and Brahmans daily. After this, he would carry a **life-size golden image** of the Buddha on his shoulder up a tall tower, where he paid homage to the **Triple Gem** with a great offering of silken garments decorated with precious stones. On the last day, the heretics tried to **sabotage** the assembly by setting fire to the tower and attempting to **assassinate** the king in the resulting confusion. But the attempt on Harsha's life was **foiled** when the culprit was caught by the king himself. He confessed that he was **hired** by the heretics and Brahmans, who were **jealous** of the **reverence** and **honour** accorded to the Buddhist monks by the king. Thereupon the king punished the ringleader and banished the Brahmans to the frontiers of India. After this, Harsha took his honoured guest to **Prayag**, where he held the **Quinquennial** festival in which he gave away all his wealth accumulated over five years, following the example of King Asoka.

After witnessing the ceremonies at Prayag, Hsüan Tsang stayed for ten more days with Harsha and then started his return journey to China. To ensure his safe passage to the border, Harsha provided him with a **military escort** led by **Kumara-raja**. He returned to China by the opposite direction to which he came to India, by way of **Jalandhar**, **Takkasila** and **Nagarahara**. Then crossing the **Hindu Kush**, he entered northern Afghanistan. Moving in a north-west direction, he reached **Badakshan** and traversing the mountains and valleys of the **Pamirs**, passed several towns in **Tajikistan**.

Then crossing the **Sarykol** range, which forms the border between China and Tajikistan, he reached **Kashgar** in **Xinjiang** province. From Kashgar, he travelled to **Yarkand** and **Khotan**, and crossing the **Takla Makan** desert, arrived at **Dunhuang.** After resting for some time at Dunhuang, he returned to **Chang'an** (Xian) in 645 AD, where he was received with great honour by the officials and monks. He appeared before the Emperor a few days later to pay his respects. He had brought back with him the following articles:

1. One hundred and fifteen grains of Buddha relics.
2. Six statues of the Buddha.
3. One hundred and twenty-four Mahayana works or sutras.
4. Other scriptures amounting to six hundred and fifty-seven works, carried by twenty-two horses.

Hsüan Tsang spent the remainder of his life translating the Sanskrit works brought back by him with the aid of a team of translators. He died in 664 AD at the age of **sixty-two**, after fulfilling his mission of learning from the wise men in India about Buddhism and bringing back the knowledge to China

Click HERE to see a map showing the route taken by Hsüan Tsang in the Si-Yü-Ki.

6. *Devastation and Downfall of Buddhism in India* [6, 7, 8, 25, 26]

There were two **devastations** on an extensive scale of Buddhist shrines and monasteries of northern India. The first was by the Ephthalites or White Huns, who invaded India in 500-520 AD and conquered the border provinces of Gandhara and Kashmir. The Hun king, **Mihirakula** was a barbarian and a sworn enemy of Buddhism, bent on destroying the Buddhist establishment. The Gupta kings fought on and off against the Huns but it was not until 533 AD that Mihirakula was subjugated by **Yasodharman** of Mandasor. Hsüan Tsang, who passed through Gandhara and Kashmir one hundred years later, heard about the devastation and reported that in Gandhara alone,

> *"Mihirakula overthrew stupas and destroyed monasteries, altogether one thousand and six hundred foundations."*

At that age, Buddhism had enough vitality to heal the wounds inflicted by the Huns for over a decade. *Sangha* life picked up again in new monasteries built over the ruins of the demolished ones. However, in the western part of India, namely: Gandhara, Kashmir and western Uttar Pradesh, Buddhism had lost much ground to the neo-Brahmanism of the Gupta age. In the eastern part, in Magadha (Bihar) and West Bengal, it began to revive again under the Buddhist king, **Harsa Vardhana** (7^{th} century AD) and later on, under the patronage of the **Pala kings** (8^{th}-12^{th} century AD).

This was a period when the *viharas* expanded from being centres of monastic training to larger institutions or ***Mahaviharas*** dedicated

to **learning** and **scholarship**. These *Mahaviharas* such as **Nalanda**, **Odantapura** and **Vikramasila** in Magadha had as many as 10,000 students from every Buddhist country. Kings, nobles, wealthy merchants and ordinary people all contributed their share towards the maintenance of these famous universities, but although their financial support made these Buddhist institutions **famous** and **prosperous**, yet they undermined the high ideals of **renunciation** and **sacrifice** on which the *Sangha* was founded. Philosophical speculations and logic in the **Mahayana tradition** to counter the realistic **Nyaya** position of right knowledge propounded by the Brahmin scholars of Mithila across the Ganges was the chief activity of these Mahayana centres. The monks slowly became accustomed to an **easy life** devoted to academic pursuits and religious rituals and **relaxed** their moral code to accommodate **worldly** practices and beliefs. This led to the **disintegration** of the Order into **diverse sects**, to a **weakening** of morality and to corresponding **erosion** of the laity's faith in the *Sangha.*

During the Pala period of its history from the 9th-11th century AD, Buddhism became heavily adulterated by the **Tantric cult**, with its magic spells, yoga and practices that were completely alien to the earlier form of Buddhism. Prior to this in the Gupta period (c. 300-550 AD), the **Mahayana** doctrine had reached the stage whereby *Arahantship* was openly condemned and *Bodhisattaship* held up as the goal towards which every good Buddhist should aim. According to the Pali scholar Rhys Davids in his book "The History and Literature of Buddhism", the whole exposition of this theory was set in the **Lotus Sutra** or the ***Saddharma Pundarika*** as it is called in Sanskrit. It was so **subversive** of the original Buddhism and even claimed to have been preached by the Buddha himself.

During the Gupta period, more philosophical speculations in the Mahayana tradition emerged and led to the **worship** of various Mahayanist gods and "***Bodhisattas***" conceived to symbolize the philosophical speculations. According to Rhys Davids, as time went on, converts to the Mahayana who were well acquainted with the **Hindu deities** of the day, conveniently adopted many Hindu deities into the **Buddhist pantheon**. These Hindu deities were represented as "*Bodhisattas*" and supporters of the Buddha in order to bring about **reconciliation** between the two faiths and to **attract** more devotees.

Grand temples were built in honour of these new "*Bodhisattas*", in which elaborate ceremonies were performed, which attracted people from all walks of life and encouraged different **superstitious beliefs** and **modes of worship**. These practices formed the basis for the development of **Tantrayana** by Buddhists who adopted the methods of **Hindu Tantrists** by incorporating Vedic and Hindu beliefs into the religion (refer to Indian Buddhism by Hajime Nakamura). Buddhism was now reduced to an **esoteric cult** in which **spells** and **magic rites** and practices supposedly capable of producing supernatural effects predominated. Tantric mystics were accepted as great leaders who claimed to have discovered the shortest route to Deliverance. In some quarters, it was believed that the "**grace of the teacher**" was sufficient for the realization of the Sublime. Some of these gurus openly **ridiculed** the monastic code and even propagated mass **indulgence** in **wine** and **women**. The discovery in the ruins of Nalanda of several Tantric images, all of which belonged to the Pala period of its history, provides evidence of the development of Tantrayana at **Nalanda** University. According to **Ven. Jagdish Kashyap** (Chapter 1, Path of the Buddha), Buddhism had become so **polluted** and **weakened** by

these perverted forms of practice that it became practically impossible to revive after the destruction of the Mahayana temples and monasteries by the Muslim invaders.

The **fatal blow** was dealt around the turn of the 13th century AD by the **Turaskas** or **Khalijis** from **Afghanistan**. They were fanatical Muslims, bent on conquest and destruction. By then, they had conquered the western part of **Uttar Pradesh** called the **Doab**, the region bordered by the **Yamuna** and the **Ganges** rivers, where they had settled themselves with **expansionist aims**. Soon they began their invasion, spreading **terror and panic** through all the towns and countryside in their path, and their advance posed a tremendous threat to all monasteries and temples of northern India. The whole doomed area in the east, ancient **Magadha** (Bihar) and **North Bengal**, fell to the marauders. **Especial ferocity** was directed towards Buddhist institutions with huge Buddha and "*Bodhisatta*" images, which were systematically **destroyed or vandalised**. The **shaven-headed monks** wearing distinctive monastic robes were easily spotted and **massacred** wholesale as idolaters. These gruesome killings and destruction are all on historical record.

The story of an assault upon the ***Mahavihara*** at **Odantapura**, Bihar in 1198 was told long afterwards, in 1243 by an eye-witness to the Persian historian Minhaz. In his book, Tabaquat-I-Nasiri, he reported as follows (refer to Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India, Part V, 3, by Sukumar Dutt):

> *"Most of the inhabitants of the place were Brahmanas with shaven heads (monks). They were* ***put to death****. Large numbers of books were found there, and when the Mahammadans saw them, they called for some person to explain the contents. But all of the men were killed. It was discovered that the whole*

fort and city was a place for study (madrasa): in the Hindi language the word ***Bihar*** *(i.e. Vihara) means a college."*

In the **destruction** of the University of **Nalanda**, the same historian recorded that thousands of monks were **burned alive** and yet more thousands **beheaded**, and the burning of the library continued for several months.

The **extermination** of Buddhist monks dealt a fatal blow to the organization of the *Sangha* in India. With the monks gone, no one was left to carry on their work or lead the **demoralized laity** who were **forcibly converted** to Islam or **absorbed** into Hinduism and Jainism. Although the latter religions were subjected to the same persecution, their priests and leaders were not easily recognized among their people to be singled out for extermination. So they could survive and rebuild their communities, but for **Buddhism** in India, it was the **end**. The high-caste Brahmin priests had always opposed Buddhism because of its criticism of the caste system and while it was under the protection of royal patronage, they had remained silent. After the downfall of Buddhism, they could act without restraint, and began to **convert Buddhist temples** that had escaped destruction into **Hindu temples**. In parts of India far from the invaders' control, the **caste system** regained its dominance and under community **pressures**, the demoralized Buddhist laity were slowly **absorbed** into Hinduism. According to Ven. Bhikkhu Jagdish Kashyap, the **three factors** discussed earlier contributed to the **downfall of Buddhism** in India, namely:

- Decay and disintegration of the *Sangha.*
- Extermination of the *Sangha* by external invaders.
- Internal opposition from the Hindu caste system.

Yet a handful of **survivors** were left in the aftermath of the **Holocaust**. They dispersed and fled with their cherished treasures of **holy scriptures** to remote, secluded monasteries far from the invader's track or to the nearest port to take ship and sail to **Arakan** or **Burma** for safety. A few of them were later found to be sheltered and settled at the areas of **Chittagong** and Arakan, the South-eastern corner of **Bangladesh**, who have been claiming **direct lineage** with the Buddhists of the glorious past. Most trekked northwards across the **Himalayas** to seek sanctuary in the more hospitable countries of **Nepal** and **Tibet**. Thus came the **final dispersal** of the Buddhist *Sangha* in India. With the **downfall of Buddhism** in India, the Buddhist shrines and monuments fell into disuse. They were plundered and destroyed, or just ignored and neglected, and in the course of time fell into **ruins and oblivion**. This period was the **saddest** era of Buddhism – and one that must not be forgotten.

7. *Restoration of Buddhist Sites in India* [13, 16]

The disappearance of Buddhism in India lasted six centuries, from the 13th-19th century AD. According to Ven. Bhikkhu Jagdish Kashyap, it was almost so complete that even in recent times, the local people of Patna, Rajgir and Muttra, once the strongholds of Buddhism, could not even recognize the Buddhist relics that were discovered there. While in many places, the **Buddha statues** that were not destroyed came to be worshipped as **Hindu deities**. The coming of the British in the 19th century into India saw the excavation of many ancient Buddhist sites which had lain buried during those lost centuries. The person who played the prime role was **Sir Alexander Cunningham** (1814-1893), the first Director General of Archeology and the **pioneer explorer** of **Buddhist heritage** in India. A man of military discipline, he became associated with archeology when he undertook excavation of the **Dhamek** *stupa* in **Sarnath** around 1840. He had an innate concern for ancient remains, and was deeply disturbed by the way the monuments were suffering from **vandalism** and the **ravages of nature**. When Cunningham was appointed the Archeological Surveyor of Indian Archeology in 1861 to lead a scheme for the **survey of Northern India**, he had a well-formulated plan of following the travel records of the famous Chinese pilgrims Fa Hsien and Hsüan Tsang. These records have proven to be of immense help in locating many of the ancient Buddhist sites such as **Kusinara**, **Sankasia**, **Savatthi**, **Nalanda**, **Kosambi** and many others that had become obscured with time.

While Cunningham was dedicated to the restoration of Buddhist heritage sites, another person who dedicated his life to **reclaiming** them for the Buddhists was **Anagarika Dharmapala** (1865-1933),

pioneer of the **Buddhist revival-movement** in India. Born in Sri Lanka by the name of David Hewavitarana, he later took the name of **Anagarika Dharmapala**, which means "Homeless Guardian of the Dhamma". Dharmapala came to Bodhgaya in 1891 after reading several articles written by Sir Edwin Arnold, author of the "Light of Asia", describing the **deplorable condition** of the **Maha Bodhi Temple**, the most sacred place of worship of Buddhists. What he saw shocked and saddened him so deeply that he vowed to devote his whole life "…*to make this sacred spot to be cared for by our own bhikkhus*".

Realizing that it would not be an easy task to accomplish unless the message of the Buddha spread, he founded the **Maha Bodhi Society of India** to spearhead the movement. With the Maha Bodhi Society started the process of **revival** and **regeneration** of Buddhism, which had nearly become extinct in the country of its origin. Starting at **Bodhgaya**, where the battle to regain control of the Mahabodhi Temple began, the Maha Bodhi Society expanded its activities to **Sarnath**, venue of the **First Sermon**. When Anagarika Dharmapala came to India in 1891, Sarnath had been reduced to a tiny village surrounded by jungle, which was the grazing ground of wild pigs. Dharmapala decided to restore it into a **living shrine**, by building a new *vihara* beside the famous **Deer Park**. With the completion of the **Mulagandha Kuti Vihara** in 1931, and the subsequent establishment of the Maha Bodhi Society Library, Free Clinic, Primary and High School, Teachers Training College, Hostel for pilgrims and a *sangharama,* Sarnath is once again pulsating with life. The impact of the expanding activities of the Maha Bodhi Society was soon felt throughout India, and led to the Buddhist **revival movement** in major cities in India. With its headquarters in **Calcutta**, the Maha Bodhi Society has expand-

ed its activities to many cities in India, as well as overseas in **Japan**, **Korea**, **Hong Kong**, **Sri Lanka**, **England** and the **USA**.

Gradually, all the eight great places of pilgrimage were restored and developed as **religious-cum-tourist resorts**. Most of them have regained much of their lost glory and are pulsating with life, thanks to the concerted efforts of the *Sangha,* archeologists, historians and lay devotees in their restoration. In particular, the Burmese and Sri Lankan Buddhists have played a crucial role by building *viharas* to accommodate the *Sangha,* so that the *bhikkhus* can act as **custodians** of the holy shrines and **enhance the sanctity** of the environment. Many of the shrines are located in **rural areas** that lack basic amenities, and the monks there play a **useful role** in promoting the education and welfare of the local population. Once again, they are living shrines, **worthy of worship** and **veneration** to which thousands of **devotees** come every year from all over the world to pay homage to the **Greatest Teacher** (*Sattha)* the world has ever known, the **Lord Buddha**, and earn merit by this pilgrimage of piety and faith. A visit to these repositories of glorious Buddhist heritage will certainly **uplift the mind** and enable one to develop many good qualities. The sight of fellow pilgrims, who come from far and wide with the common aim of honoring the Blessed One, will surely arouse **appreciative joy** (*mudita*) in one's heart. All devout Buddhists should heed the **Buddha's exhortation** and go on a pilgrimage at least **once in their lifetime**.



Plate 1. 1991 Pilgrimage Group. Group photo with Sayadaw U Jnanapurnik and Ven. Bhikkhu Sumangala of the Buddha *Vihara* Bhrikutimandap, at the latter's monastery in Kathmandu, Nepal. RETURN



Plate 2. 1997 Pilgrimage Group. Group photo with Ven. Saranankara and Sayadaw U Rewata at the ruins of Nalanda. RETURN



Plate 3. 1999 Pilgrimage Group. Group photo with Sayadaw U Rewata at Tilaura Kot, Kapilavastu. RETURN



Plate 4. 2001 Pilgrimage Group. Group photo with Sayadaw U Rewata at Tilaura Kot, Kapilavastu. RETURN

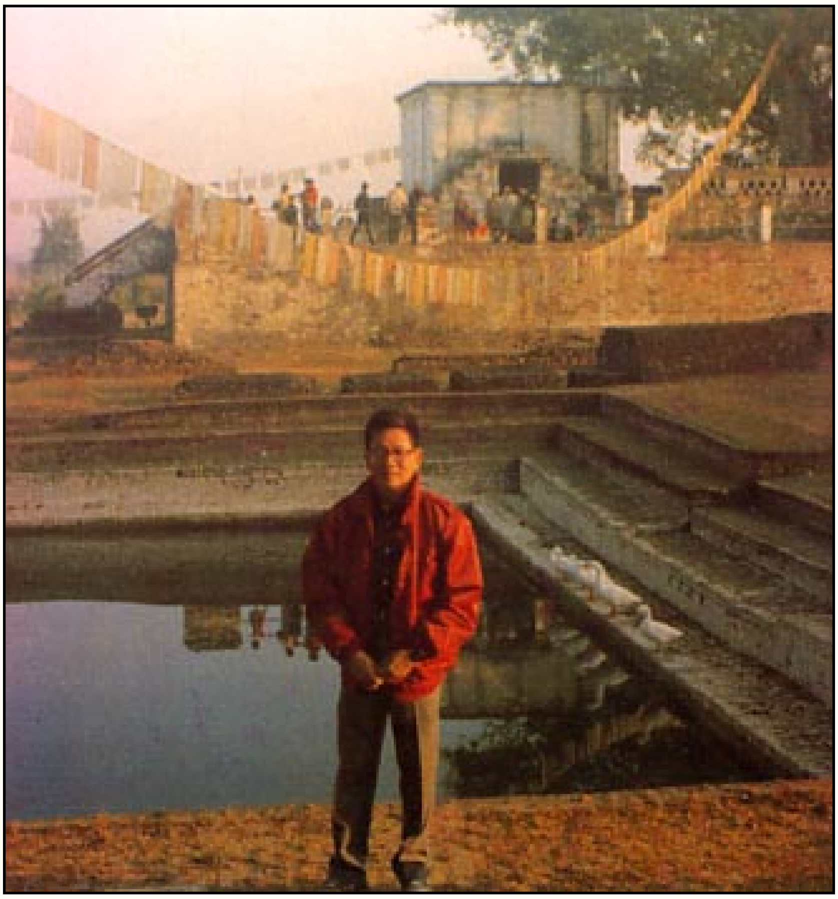


Plate 5. Lumbini Garden in 1991. The author in front of Puskarni pond. Behind is the old Maya Devi temple, dismantled in 1995 for archeological excavations. Under the temple's foundations archeologists found a commemorative stone slab atop seven layers of bricks from the 3rd century BC, believed to be the shrine built by Asoka to worship the exact spot where the Buddha was born. RETURN



Plate 6. Lumbini Garden in 2001 showing the famous Asokan Pillar. The area under the zinc roof was the site of the old Maya Devi temple. In the foreground is the Puskarni pond. RETURN



Plate 7. Lumbini. The author at the excavated site of the old Maya Devi temple. In the background is the mound believed to be the exact spot where the Buddha was born.
RETURN



Plate 8. Kapilavastu (Tilaura Kot). Ruins of the Eastern Gate of Kapilavastu, through which Prince Siddhattha left the city on the night of his Great Renunciation. RETURN

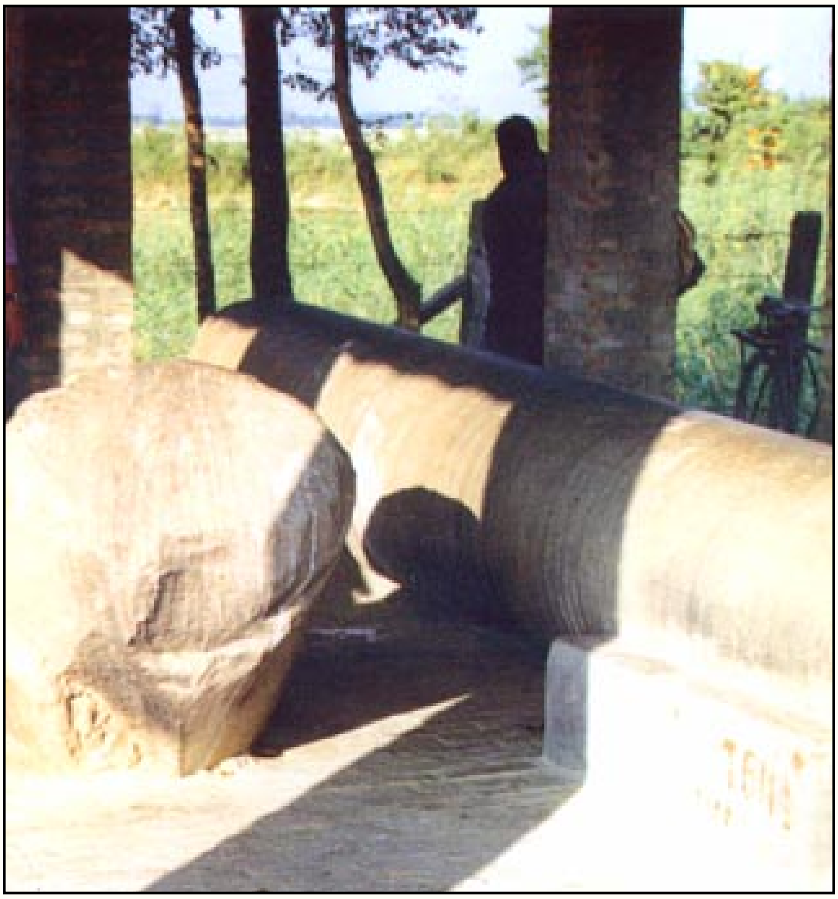


Plate 9. Kapilavastu (Niglihawa). Broken Asokan pillar at the village of Niglihawa, believed to be the birthplace of Kankamuni Buddha. He was given the name "Kanakagamana" because a shower of gold fell at the time of his birth (*kanaka* = gold, *gamana* = coming). Over time, the name has taken the corrupt form of Konagamana. RETURN

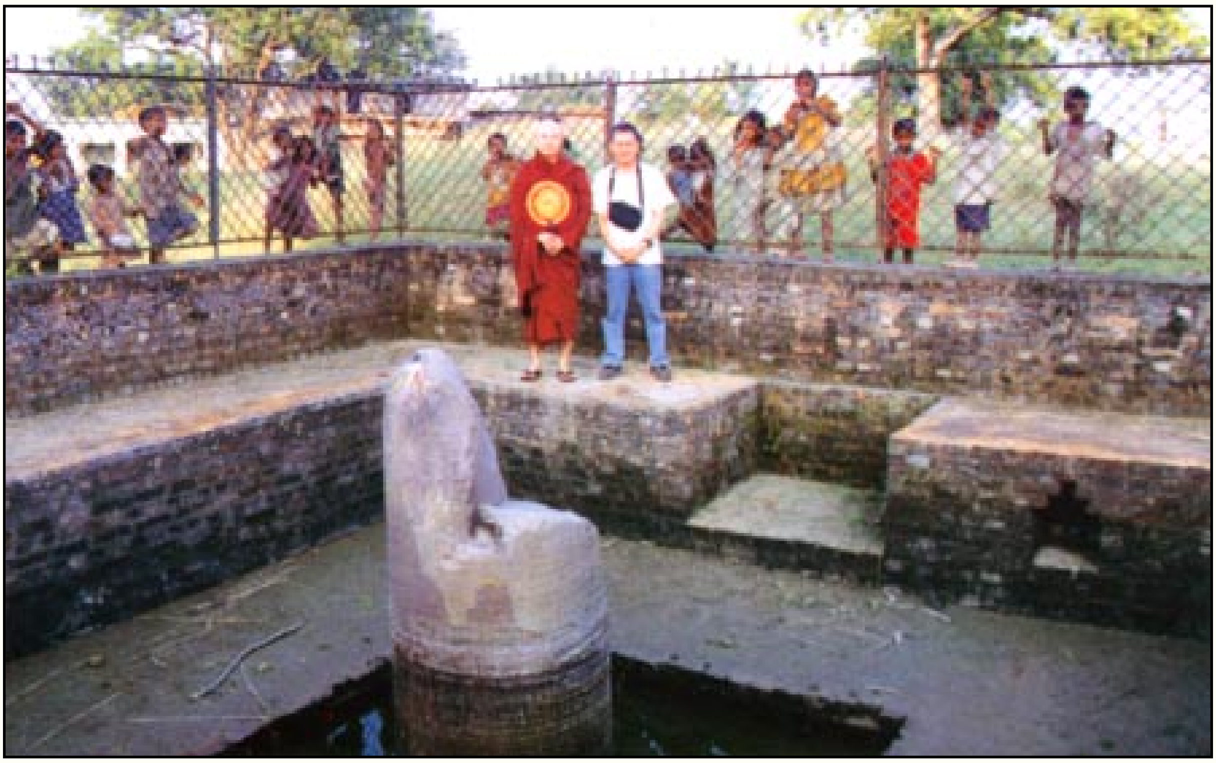


Plate 10. Kapilavastu (Gotihawa). The stump of the broken Asokan pillar below ground level at Gotihawa, the village believed to be the birthplace of Kakusandha Buddha. RETURN

Plate 11. Bodhgaya. View of the south side of the magnificent looking Mahabodhi Temple. At its four corners are four smaller towers, miniature replicas of the main spire. The *Bodhi* tree is on the left at the back of the temple. Surrounding it are stone railings which can be seen at the lower left of the picure. RETURN



Plate 12. Bodhgaya. The ancient Asokan stone gateway at the entrance of the Mahabodhi Temple. Its columns are decorated with delicate carvings.
RETURN





Plate 13. Bodhgaya.
The *Animisilocana* shrine, on elevated ground, is where the Buddha spent the second week after his Enlightenment gazing at the *Bodhi* tree without blinking his eyes, out of gratitude to the tree for providing him with shelter. RETURN



Plate 14. Bodhgaya.
The *Cankama,* or Promenade, where the Buddha spent the third week after Enlightenment pacing up and down in walking meditation. The footsteps of the Buddha are represented by lotus flowers on a narrow masonry platform about 1 metre high. A signboard nearby describes the event.
RETURN



Plate 15. Bodhgaya. Close view of the Diamond Throne, the seat of the Buddha's Enlightenment. On the right is the trunk of the *Bodhi* tree covered in monk's robes.
RETURN



Plate 16. Bodhgaya. The site of Lady Sujata's house on a mound in the village of Senani. RETURN



Plate 17. Bodhgaya. Dhongra hill near Bakraur, where the *Bodhisatta* is believed to have practised self-mortification for 6 years. The white building is a Tibetan monastery. RETURN



Plate 18. Bodhgaya. Stairs leading to the entrance of Dungeswari (door on the left at top of stairs), the cave at Dhongra hill in which the *Bodhisatta* is said to have meditated. RETURN



Plate 19. Bodhgaya. An image of the skeleton-like *Bodhisatta* inside Dungeswari.
RETURN



Plate 20. Sarnath. The ruins of the Mulagandhakuti, or Main shrine. The area in the foreground with many votive *stupas* is believed to be the site of the *Cankama*, or Promenade, where the Buddha did his walking meditation. RETURN

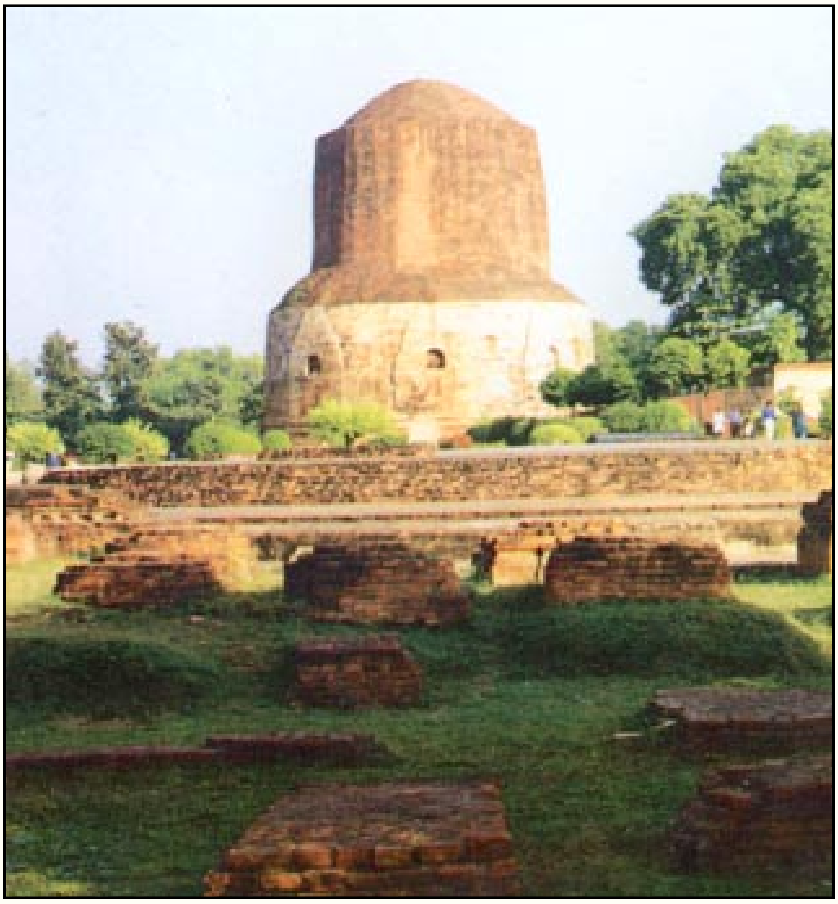


Plate 21. Deer Park, Sarnath.
The Dhamek *stupa*, whose lower portion is encased in beautifully carved stones of the Gupta period. In the foreground are the brick remains of votive *stupas*, marking the site of the *Cankama,* where the Buddha did his walking meditation. To the front is the remaining base of the Dhammarajika *stupa*, pulled down by Jagat Singh in 1794. It is slightly over 1 m high.

RETURN



Plate 22. Sarnath. The Pancayatana shrine is believed by some to be the place where the Buddha preached the First Sermon. Not as famous as the other monuments it has fewer visitors, making it a quieter and more conducive place for meditation. RETURN



Plate 23. Kushinagar. The Mahaparinibbana Temple and the imposing Nirvana *stupa* behind it. RETURN



Plate 24. Kushinagar. The famous Reclining Buddha image inside the Mahaparinibbana Temple. RETURN



Plate 25. Kushinagar. The Cremation *stupa* of the Mallas, where the Buddha was cremated. This is a favourite place for pilgrims to come and meditate. RETURN

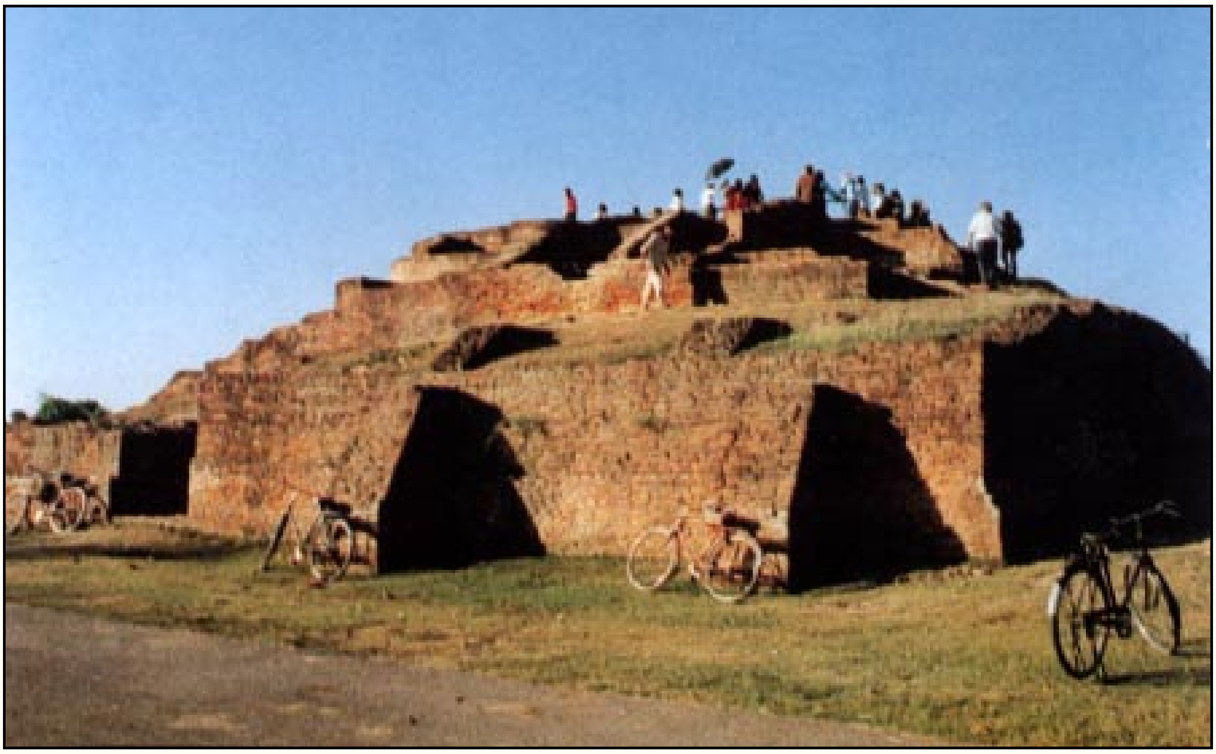


Plate 26. Sravasti. The imposing Sudatta *stupa* at Mahet, built over the foundations of the house of Sudatta, popularly known as Anathapindika. RETURN



Plate 27. Sravasti. The Angulimala *stupa* at Mahet, showing the opening of a tunnel cut through its base for drainage. RETURN



Plate 28. Sravasti, Jetavana. The site of the Kosambi *kuti* is shown by the oblong foundation walls, just behind the two *stupa* bases in the foreground. In the background, after the second palm tree, are the raised foundation walls marking the site of *Gahdhakuti,* or Perfumed Chamber, residence of the Buddha. RETURN

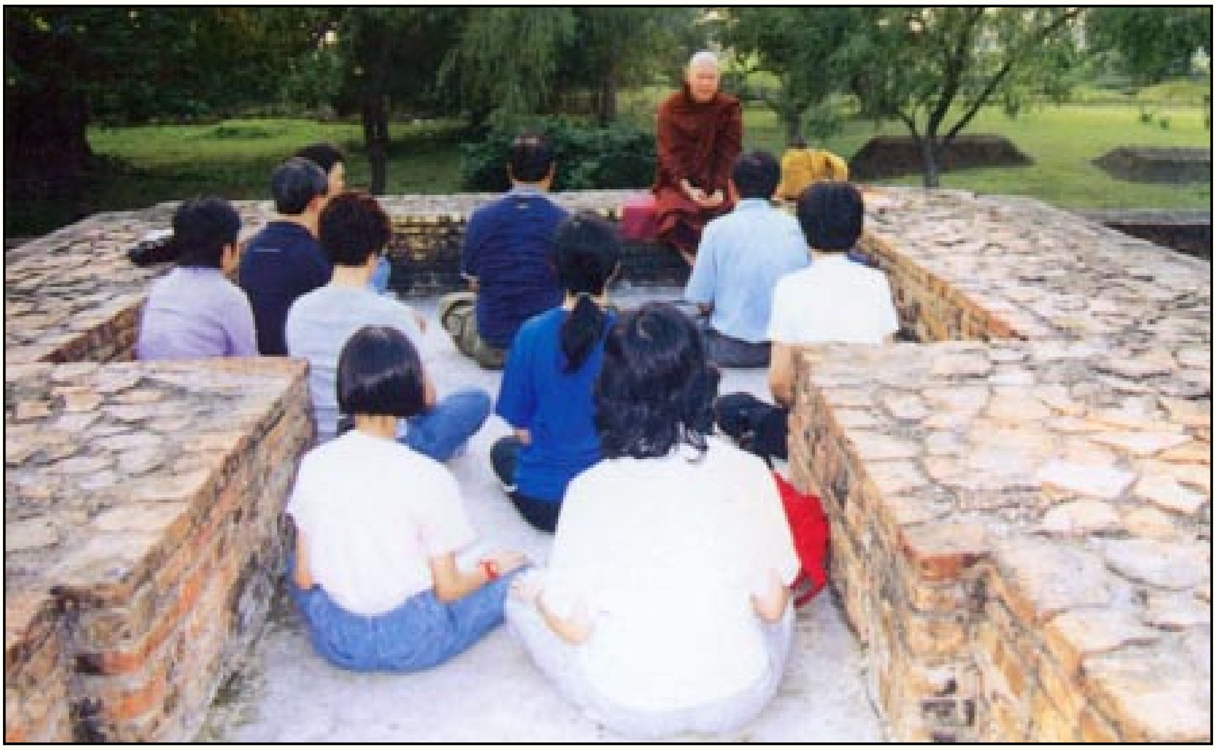


Plate 29. Sravasti, Jetavana. Temple No.2 marks the site of the original *Gandhakuti* in Jetavana. This is a favourite place for pilgrims who come to meditate. RETURN



Plate 30. Sankasia. Front view of the 3rd century BC Elephant Capital. The inset at the top right hand corner is the side view, clearly showing the elephant. RETURN



Plate 31. Sankasia. The mound at Sankasia, believed to be the remains of a Buddhist structure. At the top, dedicated to the Hindu goddess Visharidevi, is a shrine believed to be the site where the Buddha descended from Heaven at Sankasia. RETURN

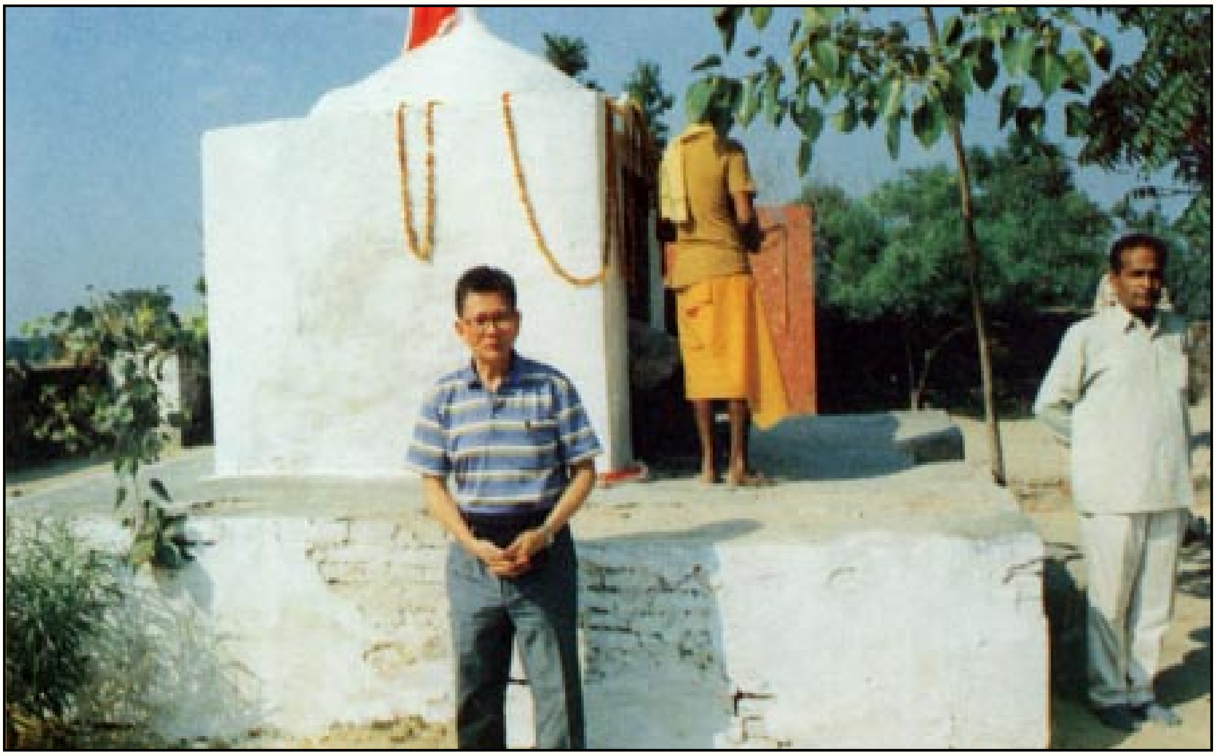


Plate 32. Sankasia. The author at the Visharidevi shrine in Sankasia, believed to be the site where the Buddha set foot when he descended from Heaven. On the right is Mr. Varma, the Indian tourist guide from Varanasi. RETURN



Plate 33. Rajgir. The Bimbisara road, leading up to Gijjhakuta, or Vulture Peak. RETURN

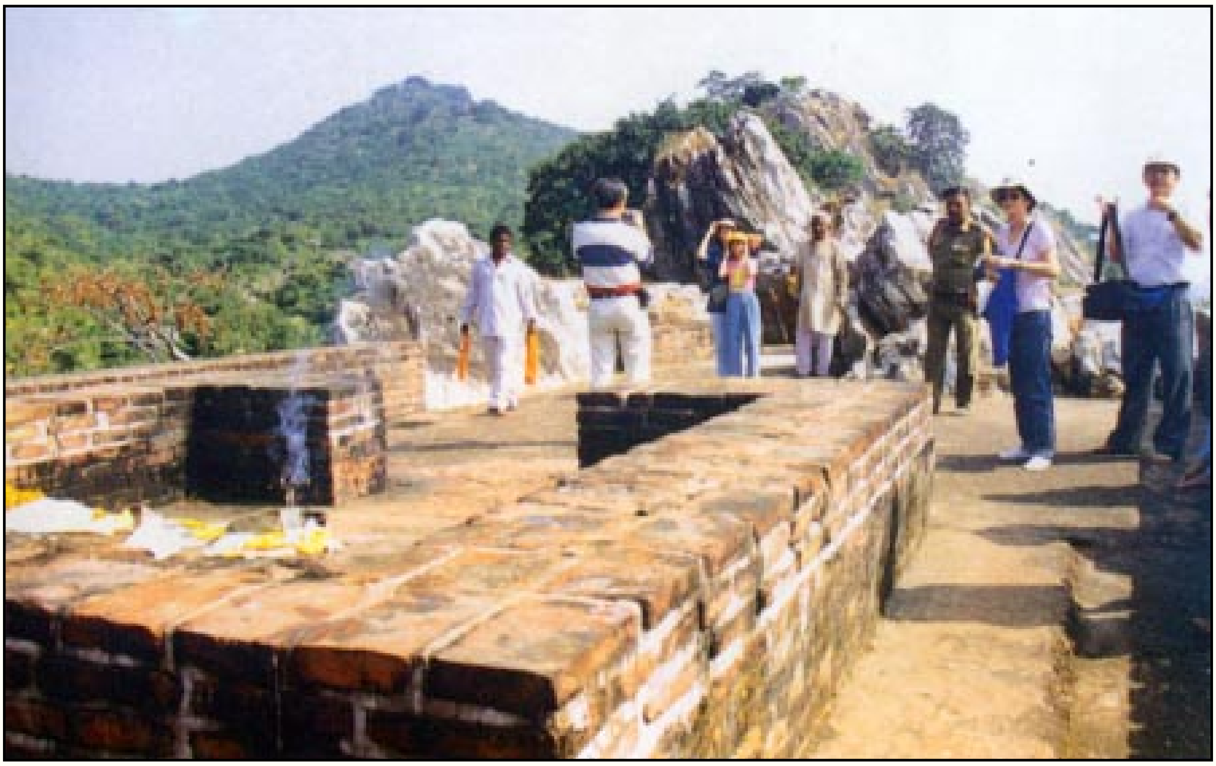


Plate 34. Rajgir. View of the top of Vulture Peak. In the foreground is a shrine, made of bricks, for pilgrims to perform *puja.* RETURN



Plate 35. Rajgir. Ruins of ancient monastic buildings excavated at Jivaka's mango grove. RETURN



Plate 36. Rajgir. The Karanda pond at Veluvana, or Bamboo Grove. RETURN



Plate 37. Rajgir. The Pippala cave, on the lower slopes of Vebhara hill. Below, on the left, are Hindu temples and the hot springs of Rajgir, a popular picnic spot for locals. RETURN

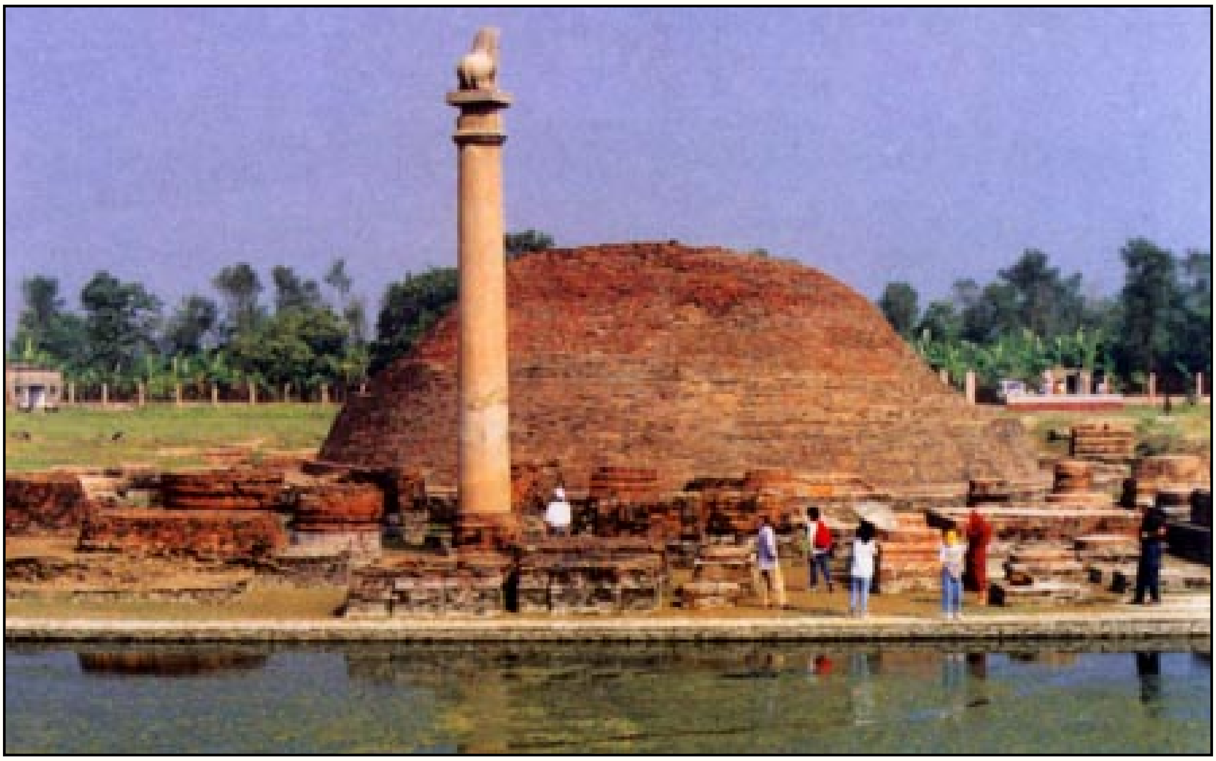


Plate 38. Vaishali. The Asoka *stupa* and the Asokan pillar with a Lion Capital on top at Kolhua. In the foreground is the Markata-hrada, or Monkey's Tank. RETURN



Plate 39. Vaishali. The dome-shaped roof of the shelter over the ruins of the original Relic *stupa* of the Licchavis at Basrah. RETURN



Plate 40. Vaishali. The remains of the original mud *stupa* of the Licchavis in the centre, surrounded by enlargements of burnt bricks of a later period. RETURN

Part II

Four Sacred Places

CONTENTS

1. *Lumbini, Birthplace of the Buddha*

a) *How to reach there*

Lumbini is located in Nepal, near the Indian border town of **Sonauli**. Nowadays one can apply for a Nepalese visa in Kuala Lumpur in order to enter the country. From the border, a good road leads to Lumbini, about 20 km away. All distances are approximate.

b) *Religious Significance* [1, 2, 4]

After fulfilling the practice of the Ten Perfections (*Paramis*) for four incalculables (*asankheyya*) and a hundred thousand world cycles (*kappa*), the *Bodhisatta* or Future Gotama Buddha took conception in the womb of **Maya Devi**, the queen of **Suddhodana**, chief of a small **Sakyan** republic, just across the present Indo-Nepalese border. On the full-moon day of May in **623 BC**, **Maya Devi** was travelling in state from the Sakyan capital of **Kapilavatthu**, to **Devadaha**, her parents' home, to deliver her first child in keeping with the ancient tradition of her people. Along the way she passed through **Lumbini Garden**, a pleasure grove of Sala trees which were then in full bloom. Stopping to admire the flowering trees and plants, she began to feel the pangs of childbirth. Quickly she summoned her female attendants to put up a curtain around her. Holding the branch of a **Sala tree** to support herself, she gave birth to the *Bodhisatta* while standing up. According to ***Majjhima Sutta*** **No. 123**, as soon as the *Bodhisatta* was born, he took seven steps to the North and declared his position in the world with these words:

Aggo'ham asmi lokassa – *I am the chief in the world.*
Jetto'ham asmi lokassa – *I am the highest in the world.*
Setto'ham asmi lokassa – *I am the noblest in the world.*
Ayam antima jati – *This is my last birth.*
Natthi dani punabbhavo – *There is no more becoming for me.*

As soon as the *Bodhisatta* was born, a **great immeasurable light** surpassing the radiance of the gods appeared, penetrating even those abysmal world inter-spaces of darkness where the sun and moon cannot make their light prevail. The ten thousand-fold world system shook, quaked and trembled and there too a great immeasurable light appeared to **herald the birth** of the *Bodhisatta*.

c) *Historical Background* [6, 9]

In **249 BC**, the great Mauryan emperor **Asoka**, who ruled nearly the whole of India from 273 to 236 BC, visited Lumbini as part of his pilgrimage to the sacred Buddhist places and worshipped in person the sacred spot where the Buddha was born. To **commemorate** his visit, he built a **stone pillar**, which bears an inscription in Brahmi script to record the event for posterity. The inscription engraved on the pillar in five lines reads (translation):

> *"Twenty years after his coronation, King Piyadassi, Beloved of the Gods, visited this spot in person and worshipped at this place because here Buddha Sakyamuni was born. He caused to make a stone (capital) representing a horse and he caused this stone pillar to be erected. Because the Buddha was born here, he made the village of Lumbini free from taxes and subject to pay only one-eighth of the produce as land revenue instead of the usual rate."*

(**Note:** The coronation of Asoka took place in **269 BC**, four years after his reign.)

After the devastation of Buddhist shrines in India by the Muslims in the 13th century AD, Lumbini was deserted and eventually engulfed by the tarsi forests. In 1896, the German archeologist **Dr. Alois A. Fuhrer**, while wandering in the Nepalese tarai in search of the legendary site, came across a stone pillar and ascertained beyond doubt it was indeed the birthplace of the Lord Buddha. The **Lumbini pillar** (also known as the Rummindei pillar) stands today majestically proclaiming that here the **Buddha was born**.

d) *Objects of interest* [9, 14, 15]

(i) Asokan Pillar

Upon entering Lumbini Garden, the most visible landmark is a tall pillar surrounded by an iron fence. This is the famous Lumbini Pillar erected by King Asoka in 249 BC. Originally it had a horse capital on top but afterwards it was struck by lightning and broken in the middle leaving 6.7 m standing without the horse capital. It is this pillar with its inscription that confirmed this site as the Buddha's birthplace.

(ii) Sanctum Sanctorum: Holiest of the Holy Spots

The area just in front of the Asokan column was formerly the site of the old Maya Devi shrine, which was dismantled around 1995 for archeological excavations. On 4th February 1996, a team of UN-sponsored archeologists announced the discovery of the Buddha's birthplace beneath the temple's foundation. The archeologists excavated 15 chambers to a depth of about 5 m, and found a commemorative stone slab **shaped like a womb** atop a platform of

seven layers of bricks dating back to the 3rd century BC, pinpointing the **exact spot** of the **Buddha's birthplace**, the *sanctum sanctorum*. According to ancient Buddhist literature, when King Asoka visited Lumbini in **249 BC**, he placed a stone on top of a pile of bricks as a commemorative monument, for himself and posterity **to worship.**

(iii) New Maya Devi Shrine

Nearby is the new Maya Devi shrine, a small pagoda-like structure, which holds a stone sculpture depicting the **Nativity of the Buddha**. The sculpture contains a bas-relief image of Maya Devi, mother of the Lord, holding a branch of the Sala tree with the newborn infant standing on a lotus pedestal. It was previously installed in the old Maya Devi temple.

(iv) Puskarni – the sacred pond

South of the Asokan pillar is the famous sacred pond – **Puskarni**, believed to be the same pond in which **Maya Devi washed** herself before giving birth to the *Bodhisatta*.

(v) Myanmar, Nepalese, Tibetan Viharas & Meditation Centre

The **Nepalese** *Vihara* is built inside Lumbini Garden. It is a Theravada monastery run by an old Nepalese *bhikkhu*. The **Tibetan** and **Myanmar** *viharas* and the **Panditarama** Meditation Centre are farther away, outside the garden complex. Pilgrims are advised to visit these places to pay their respects to the *Sangha,* whose presence has sanctified the environment of Lumbini.

(vi) Kapilavatthu, the Sakyan Capital

Located some **27 km west** of Lumbini, lie the ruins of the ancient Sakyan city of **Kapilavatthu**. The site has been identified with the archeological mound at **Tilaura Kot** (kotmound, fortified area). Excavations of these ruins by the Nepalese Archeology Department have exposed mounds of old *stupas* and monasteries, made of kiln-burnt bricks and clay-mortar. The remains are surrounded by a moat and the walls of the city are made of bricks. The fortified area of the site is 518 m running north-south and 396 m from east to west, roughly 20.5 hectares. On the basis of the archeological findings, the outer city of common citizens is very extensive and fits the reported size of Kapilavatthu as narrated by Hsüan Tsang in the Si-yü-ki.

Pilgrims visiting Lumbini should spend an extra day to visit Tilaura Kot where they can still see the site of the **Eastern Gate**, called the ***Mahabhinikkhamanam Dvara*** (Great Renunciation Gate). It was from here that the *Bodhisatta* set out on his quest for Enlightenment on the night of the full-moon of *Asalha* (July) in 594 BC when he was twenty-nine years old. In the vicinity of Tilaurakot, there are several Buddhist sites of significance, notably:

(vii) Niglihawa, Birthplace of Kanakamuni Buddha

Niglihawa, 3 km north-east of Tilaura Kot, is believed to be the ancient town of **Sobhavati**, birthplace of **Kanakamuni Buddha**. At the time of his birth, a heavy shower of gold fell over the whole of Jambudipa. Taking this "coming down of gold" as an omen, he was named **Kanakagamana** (*kanaka* = gold, *agamana* = coming). Over time, the original name Kanakagamana has taken the corrupt form of **Konagamana**. Emperor Asoka visited this place in 249 BC during his pilgrimage and erected a pillar to commemorate

the event. Today, the **Asokan pillar** can still be seen but it is broken into **two pieces**. The upper portion is 4.6 m long while nearly 1.5 m of the lower portion stands above ground slightly tilted. The inscription in Brahmi script on the pillar reads:

> *"King Piyadassi, Beloved of Gods, having been crowned king fourteen years, increased the stupa of Buddha Kanakamuni to double its original size. Twenty years after his coronation, he came himself and worshipped it."* (translation)

(viii) Gotihawa, Birthplace of Kakusandha Buddha

Gotihawa, 7 km south-west of Tilaura Kot, is believed to be the ancient city of Khemavati, the birthplace of **Kakusandha Buddha**. Emperor Asoka visited it too at the same time and erected a **pillar** to record his visit. The pillar is broken and only the lower portion of about 3 m still stands in situ, but below ground level. Both the Asokan pillars described here were mentioned by **Hsüan Tsang** in the Si-yü-ki when he visited Kapilavatthu in 637 AD. At that time, each had a lion-head capital at the top.

(ix) Kudan, Site of Nigrodharama (Banyan Grove)

At Kudan is a site, which scholars believe to be the *Nigrodharama* or Banyan Grove, which King Suddhodana offered to the Buddha when he visited Kapilavastu. It was here that Ven. Rahula was ordained when he came to ask for his inheritance from the Buddha. The remains of a brick foundation wall of an ancient monastery, believed to be built during Buddha's time, is still standing at the site.

2. *Bodhgaya, Place of the Buddha's Enlightenment*

a) *How to reach there*

Bodhgaya is located in Bihar state, 105 km by road south of Patna or 230 km by road east of Varanasi. All distances are approximate.

b) *Religious Significance* [1, 2, 4]

After the Great Renunciation, the *Bodhisatta* approached two ascetics named **Alara Kalama** and **Udakka Ramaputta** who taught him to attain the Formless *Jhanas.* Although they were the highest attainments at that time, still he was dissatisfied because they did not lead to **Nibbana**. Leaving them, he arrived at an isolated **cave** on a hill now known as **Dhongra** hill, where he underwent painful and profitless practices for six years until his body became skeleton-like and he nearly died. Realizing the **futility** of **self-mortification**, he adopted the **Middle Path** and started eating again to regain his strength. His five companions, thinking that he had given up the struggle and reverted to luxury, left him. The *Bodhisatta* was now alone in his struggle. One day on the eve of *Wesak,* while waiting to go on alms-round under a Banyan tree, the *Bodhisatta* was offered milk rice in a **golden dish** by the **Lady Sujata**, daughter of the chieftain of the nearby village of **Senanigama**. After the meal, the *Bodhisatta* took the dish and went to the **Neranjara** river, and saying: *"If I am to succeed in becoming a Buddha today, let this dish go upstream; but if not, let it go downstream",* he threw it into the water. There it floated to the middle of the river and raced upstream for eighty cubits (37 m) before it sank in a whirlpool.

In the evening, on the way to the ***Bodhi* tree**, the *Bodhisatta* was offered eight handfuls of grass by the grass-cutter **Sotthiya**, which he placed on his seat under the *Bodhi* tree. Sitting cross-legged **facing the east**, the *Bodhisatta* made a resolution, saying: "*Let my skin, sinews and bones become dry. Let my flesh and blood dry up. Never from this seat will I stir until I have attained Buddhahood.*"

This was the **culmination** of his Perfections developed over countless aeons, that no being, not even Mara and his dreaded army, could unseat the *Bodhisatta* from the ***Aparajita*** throne. When challenged by Mara, the *Bodhisatta* called upon the earth to bear witness to his **Thirty Perfections**, by touching the ground with his right hand. Instantly, the earth responded with a **great quake** that shook and scattered Mara and his forces until they fled in defeat. Before the sun had set, the *Bodhisatta* had vanquished Mara and his forces. Then with mind tranquilized and purified, in the first watch of night, he developed the **Knowledge of Past Lives;** in the middle watch, the **Divine Eye;** and in the last watch, he developed the **Knowledge of Destruction of Taints** and attained **Supreme Enlightenment**. A Supreme Buddha (*Samma-sambuddho*) had arisen in the world on the full moon day of ***Wesak*** in **588 BC**.

c) *Historical Background* [6, 9]

Bodhgaya, the scene of the Buddha's Supreme Enlightenment, is the **most hallowed** place on earth to Buddhists. During the Buddha's time, this place by the banks of the river **Neranjara** was known as **Uruvela**. **King Asoka** was the first to build a temple at this sacred spot. A portrayal of the Asokan temple and other buildings at Bodhgaya has been found in a bas-relief on the **Bharhut Stupa** in Madhya Pradesh. Beginning with Asoka's first visit in 259 BC, countless pilgrims have gravitated to this **cradle of**

Buddhism without intermission for more than 1,500 years. The devastation of Buddhist *viharas* and shrines by Muslim hordes in the 13th century abruptly halted the flow of pilgrims to Bodhgaya. **Dharmasvamin**, a Tibetan pilgrim, visited Bodhgaya in 1234 AD. He found the place deserted and wrote:

> *"Only four monks were found staying (in the vihara). One said, 'It is not good. All have fled in fear of the Turushka soldiery.' They blocked up the door in front of the Mahabodhi image with bricks and plastered it. Near it they placed another image as a substitute."*

When Buddhism declined in India, the **Burmese** came to the **rescue** of the decaying Mahabodhi Temple by undertaking repairs during the 14th and 15th centuries. Thereafter, Bodhgaya was forgotten by the Buddhists and the Great Temple fell into ruins. A wandering **Hindu ascetic**, Mahant Gosain Giri, taking advantage of the situation, established his Math at Bodhgaya and **took control** of the Temple and environments in **1590 AD**. Thereafter, the holy Buddhist shrine passed into the hands of successive Mahants who used the place for **sacrilegious practices**. In 1861, **Cunningham** found the Mahant and his followers indulging in all sorts of non-Buddhist ceremonies at the main shrine. **Sir Edwin Arnold**, author of the *Light of Asia* visited the Mahabodhi Temple in 1885 and reported this observation in the **Daily Telegraph** in London:

> *"The Buddhist world had, indeed, well-nigh forgotten this hallowed and most interesting centre of their faith – the Mecca, the Jerusalem, of a million Oriental congregations when I sojourned in Buddhagaya a few years ago. I was so grieved to see Maharatta peasants performing 'Sharaddh (or Shrada)'*

in such a place, and thousands of precious ancient relics of carved stone inscribed with Sanskrit lying in piles around."

Note: *Shrada* is a Hindu last rite, in which mantras and verses are chanted on behalf of the dead, in the belief that this will free the soul from its earthly existence, and allow it to be reborn in heaven.

d) *Anagarika Dharmapala and the Maha Bodhi Society* [6, 16]

The battle to **regain control** of the Mahabodhi Temple by Buddhists began in January 22, 1891 when **Anagarika Dharmapala** visited Bodhgaya. Visibly moved by the **neglect** and **sacrilege** of this most sacred shrine, he took the vow, "*I will work on to make this sacred spot to be cared for by our own Bhikkhus.*" As a first step, he founded the **Maha Bodhi Society** of Buddhagaya on May 31, 1891 to garner support for this noble objective. Next, he invited four Buddhist monks from Sri Lanka to come and stay at Bodhgaya, namely: Ven. **Chandajoti**, Ven. **Sumangala**, Ven. **Pemmananda** and Ven. **Sudassana**. They arrived at Bodhgaya in July 1891 and took up residence in the Burmese Rest House. As the Mahant had property rights to the land in Bodhgaya, he objected to their presence and in February 1893, two of the monks were severely beaten up by his men. Two years later in 1895, when Anagarika Dharmapala attempted to install a Buddha image presented to him by the people of Japan on the upper floor of the Temple, he was **assaulted** and **prevented** from doing so by the Mahant's men. So the image was kept in the Burmese Rest House. Still the Mahant and some Hindu organizations were not satisfied and tried to get the image removed from the Rest House but the Government did not yield.

In 1906, the Mahant filed a suit seeking to **eject the Buddhist monks** from the Rest House. Thereafter a long legal battle ensued between the Mahant and the Buddhists which continued till 1949, when the State of Bihar enacted the Buddha Gaya Temple Management Act which effectively transferred control of the Temple land and other property to a **Management Committee**. Two things in the Bill were **objectionable;** one was that the nine-man Management Committee of the Temple would have a **Hindu majority**, and the other that Buddhist members should be of Indian nationality. In spite of protests by the Maha Bodhi Society, the Bill was passed with an amendment for provision of an **Advisory Board** in which the majority should be Buddhists and not necessarily all of Indian nationality. This means that Buddhists can only advise on the management of the Mahabodhi Temple but the **control** and **final say** belong to the **Hindus**!

To the Maha Bodhi Society, there is no justification for the Mahabodhi Temple to be **controlled by non-Buddhists** just as if a Muslim mosque, a Christian church, a Sikh gurdwara or a Hindu temple were to be controlled by persons of different faiths. In his article entitled *The Vow Still Remains* in Sambodhi, 1996, the **late Ven. Pannarama Mahathera**, Bhikkhu-in-charge of Buddhagaya Maha Bodhi Society, revealed the irony that even the **Advisory Board**, which was supposed to be controlled by Buddhists, has only **11 Buddhist** members but **14 non-Buddhist** members! It is time that these non-Buddhist members were **replaced** by representatives from **Buddhist organizations** which are really concerned about the development of **Bodhgaya**, the place of Buddha's Enlightenment. Thus, Dharmapala's vow is **not fulfilled** and it still remains.

e) *Objects of Interest* [4, 9, 17, 18, 19]

(i) Mahabodhi Temple

The Mahabodhi Temple has a long history. Excavations by Cunningham in 1872 suggested **three periods** in its construction. The first phase of construction by King Asoka during the 3rd century BC was the ***Bodhi*** **Shrine**, represented in the bas-relief on the 2nd century BC Bharhut *Stupa.* The second phase of construction during the 1st century AD involved renovation of the original *Bodhi* Shrine by two pious ladies, **Surangi** and **Nagadevi**, wives of **Sunga** kings. The third phase of construction was undertaken by **Huviska**, the **Kusana king** of the 2nd century AD. The images of the Buddha originated during this period. Therefore shrines were erected for their installation. Cunningham suggested that the entire Mahabodhi Temple, as seen today, was mainly the **structure of the Huviska** period (111-138 AD). As it was built over the remains of Asoka's shrine, the **Vajrasana Throne** retains its original position of the Seat of Enlightenment. In the 7th century AD, renovations were carried out which included placing a **new basalt slab** over the older plaster throne at the Vajrasana. In the late 19th century, massive renovations were carried out under the able supervision of **Cunningham**, **Beglar** and **R. L. Mitra** to restore the Maha Bodhi Temple, which had fallen into ruins after centuries of vandalism and neglect by its squatter-occupants, the Mahants. The magnificent building we see today is the result of their **rare devotion** and **dedication**.

The Mahabodhi Temple is undoubtedly the most exquisite-looking building in Bodhgaya. Standing 52 m high with a base of 15.2 sq. m, it consists of a straight **pyramidal tower** surmounted by a *stupa.* At the corners of the base, there arise **four smaller towers**

– miniature replicas of the main spire. The main door faces east and in front of it there is an imposing **ancient gateway** decorated with carvings. The niches on the walls of both sides of the Temple contain images of the Buddha. The main shrine hall or **Sanctum** on the ground floor is reached after passing through a **vaulted passage**, on both sides of which are **stone staircases** leading up to a smaller shrine hall on the first floor. On entering the Sanctum, one comes face to face with the great gilded image of the Buddha seated in the **earth-touching-posture** (***bhumi phassa-mudra)***. Just gazing at this magnificent image of our Lord will certainly evoke **feelings of joy** and **reverence** in the heart of the pilgrim! This is the result of the **faith** and **devotion** in heeding the **Buddha's exhortation** to "*visit the holy places and look upon them with feelings of reverence*".

The **colossal gilded image** is from the **10th century AD**. Here the Buddha is depicted as sitting on a **patterned cushion** instead of a lotus. It is supported by a pedestal decorated with figures of lions alternating with elephants. The patterned cushion is a common feature found in other Buddha images from Eastern India, which was probably copied from this image. Most people are not aware of the fact that this image was not in the temple when archeological explorations were going on in and around Buddhagaya by the then British government. According to an article on *Buddhagaya Sculptures* in the Sambodhi, 1993, R. L. Mitra noted that it was in the **Mahant's compound**. Later on, at the request of **Cunningham** and **Beglar**, it was moved to its present location at the main shrine. If not for the timely intervention of these two gentlemen, this inspiring image would still be wasting in the Mahant's compound instead of its present rightful place for pilgrims to worship!

(ii) Bodhi Tree (Bodhidruma)

The ***Bodhi* tree** under which the Buddha attained Supreme Enlightenment is situated behind the Temple. It is a Pipal tree (*Ficus religiosa*), also known in Pali as *assattha.* It is said to have sprung up at the same time when the Buddha was born, i.e., his **co-natal** (*sahajata*). According to the commentaries, different Buddhas attained Enlightenment seated under different trees of their choice and each of them became the '***Bodhi*** tree' of the particular Buddha during his dispensation. In the present dispensation, only the *Bodhi* tree of Gotama Buddha is reverenced. The **site** of the *Bodhi* tree is the **same** for all Buddhas. It is believed that no place on earth can **support** the weight of the Buddha's Enlightenment. The ground is so **firm** that it remained **unmoved**, even as a violent **earthquake** shook the world and **scattered** Mara and his army, who had come to challenge the *Bodhisatta* for the **Seat** of Enlightenment. Even Sakka *Devaraja* is unable to travel in the air immediately above it. Such is the charismatic power of the place called "**Navel of the Earth**".

From earliest times, kings and commoners have come here to honor it. Being the **object of veneration** of Buddhists, it naturally became the **target of destruction** by the enemies of Buddhism. According to Hsüan Tsang, the *Bodhi* tree was first cut down by **Asoka** before his conversion, but later out of remorse, he revived the tree by bathing the roots with scented water and milk. Asoka paid homage to the tree so earnestly that his queen, **Tissarakkha**, was filled with jealousy and had it destroyed secretly. Again, it was revived by Asoka as before. Thereafter, he built a wall over 3 m high to surround it for protection.. After the fall of the Mauryan empire in the 2nd century BC, the Sunga king **Pusyamitra**, who was a persecutor of Buddhism, also destroyed the *Bodhi* tree but

a sapling of the tree from Sri Lanka was brought back and replanted in the same spot. During the 6th century AD **Sasanka**, a Hindu king, cut down the *Bodhi* tree, but sometime later it was replanted with a sapling from the *Bodhi* tree in Sri Lanka by King **Purvavarma** of Magadha, who then built a wall 7.3 m high to surround it. Its remains were 6.1 m high when Hsüan Tsang visited it. In 1876, the old decaying *Bodhi* tree fell down during a storm and a sapling from it was planted on the same spot by **Cunningham**. The present *Bodhi* tree is now 125 years old.

(iii) Vajrasana or Diamond Throne

The *Vajrasana* is located between the *Bodhi* tree and the Temple. It marks the actual spot where the Buddha attained Supreme Enlightenment. It is now marked by a red sandstone slab 2.3 m long by 1.3 m wide by 0.9 m high. Pilgrims who visit this spot should spend some time in this conducive environment to reflect on the virtues of the Buddha to attain fullness of **faith** and **calm** followed by **mindfulness** meditation to develop insight.

(iv) The Buddha's Stay at Seven Places after Enlightenment

After attaining Buddhahood on the full-moon night of *Wesak,* as dawn broke the Buddha uttered a paean of joy (*udana*). While sitting on the *Vajrasana* he decided to continue sitting on the undefeated throne, on which he overcame Mara and fulfilled all his wishes, including the one to become a Buddha.

• *First Week on the Throne (Pallanka Sattaha)*

The Buddha sat on the Diamond Throne for seven days in meditation absorbed in the bliss of emancipation (*Arahantship* Fruition). At the end of seven days, he emerged from the absorption and

contemplated on the Doctrine of **Dependent Origination** (*Paticca Samuppada*) the whole night.

• ***Second Week of the Gaze (Animisa Sattaha)***

Throughout the second week, as a mark of **gratitude** to the *Bodhi* Tree for providing him shelter, the Buddha stood gazing at it **without closing his eyes.** On the spot where the Buddha stood, a shrine was erected by King Asoka. This shrine, named the **Animisilocana Cetiya**, is located on elevated ground within the courtyard in front of the Temple.

• ***Third Week on the Walk (Cankama Sattaha)***

The third week was spent on **walking meditation** along a 'jewelled promenade or ***Cankama***' running from east to west between the Diamond throne and the Animisilocana Cetiya.

• ***Fourth Week in Jewelled House (Ratanaghara Sattaha)***

The Buddha spent the fourth week in the 'Jewelled House', reflecting on the ***Abhidhamma***, which deals with absolute truths concerning mental and material processes. As he contemplated on the deep and profound doctrine of the ***Patthana*** or **Conditional Relations**, there arose **great rapture** in the Omniscient mind, which **activated** material processes in the body to **emit rays of six colours** – blue, gold, white, red, pink and a massive brightness of all these assorted colours. This spot is now marked by a small shrine within the compound to the north of the *Cankama*.

• ***Fifth Week at Ajapala Nigrodha Tree (Ajapala Sattaha)***

During the fifth week, the Buddha sat at the root of the *Ajapala* Banyan tree reflecting on the *Dhamma* and absorbed in the bliss of *Phalasamapatti* (Fruition of *Arahantship*). This Banyan tree was

called *Ajapala* because goatherds came for shelter under its shade. Here the Buddha declared the qualities of a true Brahman in reply to a question by a conceited brahmin. This site is indicated by a **signboard** within the courtyard, directly in **front** of the Temple.

• ***Sixth Week at Mucalinda (Mucalinda Sattaha)***

After seven days at the *Ajapala* Banyan tree, the Buddha moved to the Mucalinda (*Barringtonia acutangula*) tree, a short distance south of the Temple. There he sat for seven days at the root of the Mucalinda tree, absorbed in the bliss of *Arahantship*. At that time, there arose an **untimely rainstorm** and gloom for seven days. Mucalinda, serpent king of the lake, came out and used its coils to encircle the Buddha's body and its hood to cover the Buddha's head, thereby protecting the Lord. The site of this episode is at the Mucalinda pond, a short distance **south** of the Temple.

• ***Seventh Week at Rajayatana Tree (Rajayatana Sattaha)***

After seven days at the Mucalinda tree, the Buddha moved to the Rajayatana tree (*Buchanania latifolia*) near the Temple. Here he sat at the foot of the tree absorbed in the bliss of *Arahantship* for seven days. At that time, two merchant brothers, **Tapussa** and **Bhallika**, from **Ukkala** in **Myanmar** met the Buddha and offered him rice cakes and honey. They became the **first lay disciples** and asked the Buddha for an object of worship. Thereupon the Buddha rubbed his head and presented them with **eight hairs**. The brothers returned to their native Myanmar with the precious hair relics, which were later enshrined by the king in **Shwedagon Pagoda** in Yangon. The site of this episode is marked by a signboard just **south** of the Temple.

(v) Sujata Kuti

Prior to enlightenment, the *Bodhisatta* was staying on the other side of the **Neranjara** river in a cave now known as **Dungeswari**. This cave is on a hill, now known as the Dhongra hill, about an hour's journey from Bodhgaya. After undergoing painful and profitless practices for six years, he decided to adopt the Middle Path and moved to the **Uruvela forest** near the village of **Senanigama**, where one can still see the site of **Lady Sujata's house**, which is now on a small mound. In that village too, one can visit a small shrine under a Banyan tree, with images portraying **Sujata's offering** of milk rice to the *Bodhisatta* on the eve of his Enlightenment

(vi) Uruvela Forest

The area, which was once a forest, is now a wooded area near the Sujata Shrine. Here one can find an old building with a dry well in the centre. This site is believed to be the **fire-chamber** of the **Kassapa brothers**, three matted hair *Jatilas,* who had a following of **one thousand disciples**. Here the Buiddha tamed the serpent, which inhabited the fire chamber. The taming of the elder Kassapa brother **Uruvela** took a longer time. The Buddha had to employ his psychic powers to convert the misguided *Jatila.* After Uruvela Kassapa became the Buddha's disciple, his brothers, **Nadi** and **Gaya**, followed suit together with their followers. After hearing the **Fire Sermon** preached by the Buddha, the thousand newly ordained *bhikkhus* became ***Arahants.***

(vii) Temples and Monasteries in Bodhgaya

Bodhgaya is the fountainhead of Buddhism. It occupies an area of only 15 sq. km, but within this small area are found over **thirty** monasteries and institutions representing every country in the world with a sizeable Buddhist community. A visit to some of

these temples can help one to understand how the religion is practised in different countries according to local culture that does not run counter to the Buddha *Dhamma*. There are also a few ***Vipassana*** meditation centres, such as the **Burmese *Vihara*** and the **International Meditation Centre**, to cater for **yogis** who wish to spend a **meditation retreat** at Bodhgaya. The names of Buddhist temples, monasteries and institutions listed in the Buddha Mahotsav 1999 Souvenir Programme are shown below, in alphabetical order:

> *All India Bhikkhu Sangha, Asian Buddhist Culture Centre, Bangladesh Temple, Buddhagaya Temple Management Committee, Burmese Vihar, Chinese Temple, Daijokyo Japanese Buddhist Temple, Dhamma Bodhi Meditation Centre, Drikyug Charitable Trust, Druk Nawag Thupten Choeling, Indosan Nipponjee Japanese Temple, International Meditation Centre, Jambunad Vihar, Karma Temple, Korea Temple, Maha Bodhi Society, Maitreya Project, Nav Bauddha Vihar, Panch Sheela Vihar, Root Institute for Wisdom Culture, Royal Bhutan Temple, Sakya Monastery, Sambodhi Welfare and Cultural Society, Shechen Monastery, Taiwan Temple, Tamang Nepal Temple, Thai Bharat Society, Thai Bodhi Kam, Tibetan Temple, Trailokya Centre, Vietnam Temple and Wat Thai Temple.*

3. *Sarnath, Place of the Buddha's First Sermon*

a) *How to reach there*

Sarnath is located in the state of Uttar Pradesh, 30 km from the city of Varanasi (Benares). From Bodhgaya, the distance is 250 km. All distances are approximate.

b) *Religious Significance* [1, 2, 4]

After spending seven weeks at the seven places in Bodhgaya following his Enlightenment, the Buddha decided to teach the *Dhamma* he had realized to the Five Ascetics, namely: **Kondanna**, **Vappa**, **Bhaddiya**, **Mahanama** and **Assaji**, who had served him for six years, but left after he abandoned the path of self-mortification. He arrived at **Deer Park** or **Isipatana** in modern day Sarnath on the full-moon day of ***Asalha***, exactly two months after *Wesak*. When they saw the Buddha coming in the distance they decided not to welcome him, but as soon as the Buddha approached they found themselves unable to keep their pact and began to serve him. The Buddha was able to convince them of his Attainment. That very night, the Buddha delivered the historic **First Sermon**, the ***Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*** or Discourse on Turning the Wheel of *Dhamma*, which led to Kondanna attaining the **first stage of sainthood** at the end of the discourse. The remaining four ascetics attained the first stage of sainthood successively over the next four days. Later, the Buddha preached to them the ***Anattalakkhana Sutta*** or Discourse on the Characteristics of Non-Self, hearing which they attained ***Arahantship*** or **final sainthood**.

In Sarnath too, the Buddha converted the rich man **Yasa and his 54 friends**, who also became *Arahants*. Later, the Buddha despatched them in various directions to propagate the *Dhamma*, with each to go a separate way. Thus Sarnath became famous as the place of the **First Sermon**, as well as the **founding of the Sangha** (Monkhood).

c) *Historical Background* [6, 9]

King Asoka visited Sarnath in 249 BC and erected several monuments to mark his pilgrimage, notably; the ***Dhamek** stupa, **Dharmarajika** stupa* and the **Asokan** pillar surmounted by the famous **Lion Capital**, which is now the **crest** of India. During the reign of King Kaniska (78 AD), Sarnath was a centre of religious activity and the famous collosal ***Bodhisatta*** image with a large parasol, was installed by the *bhikkhu* **Bala of Mathura**. During the Gupta period (4th-6th century AD), the *Dhamek Stupa* was encased with carved stones, the **Mulagandhakuti** main shrine was enlarged and the famous **Preaching Buddha** image, a gift of King Kumaragupta, was added.

In 520 AD, Sarnath had its share of destruction during the invasion of the Huns under the barbarian Mihirakula. But after the Huns were defeated, Sarnath again flourished under the Buddhist king, **Harsa Vardharna** (606-647 AD) and continued to be a living shrine under the **Pala kings** (8th-12th century AD). The last known patron of Sarnath was **Queen Kumaradevi**, the pious Buddhist wife of King Govindachandra of Benares (1114-1154 AD). She built a large monastery at Sarnath named **Dhammacakka Jina Vihara**, the ruins of which were exposed during excavations in the early 20th century. Things took a turn for the worse when Muslim hordes overran India and started their trail of destruction. After

the **diaspora** of the ***Sangha*** in India, Sarnath became deserted and was forgotten for about 600 years.

In 1794, Sarnath came to the notice of the world under **tragic circumstances.** Jagat Singh, a minister in Benares, dismantled the famous Dharmarajika *stupa* as a convenient way of collecting bricks and stones for building a housing colony. When the *stupa* was pulled down, workmen found at a depth of 8.3 m, a stone box containing a green marble casket. Inside it were **human relics**, presumably those of the **Buddha**, since they were enshrined there by King Asoka. Following Hindu custom, Jagat Singh consigned them into the Ganges River, where they were **lost forever**.

This act of **vandalism** would have gone unnoticed but for a report about the discovery by **Jonathan Duncan**, Commissioner of Benares, which appeared in the '**Asiatic Researches**.' Soon public attention was attracted to the ruins of Sarnath and in 1815, **Col. C. Mackenzie** began explorations and discovered some sculptures, which are now kept at the **Calcutta Museum**. In 1835-36, Cunningham carried out excavations and recovered over forty sculptures and carved stones. Another tragedy struck when they were carted away in his absence together with sixty cartloads of stones from the shrines as construction material for two bridges and some buildings in Benares. Further excavations were continued on and off from 1851 to 1922, which exposed the **Dhamek** *stupa,* the **Dharmarajika** *stupa,* **Mulagandhakuti** shrine, **Asokan** pillar and the ruins of several monasteries. The first four monuments are considered more **sacred** because of their association with the Buddha. The fifth sacred spot is probably the sunken shrine of **Pancayatana**, which is believed by some monk teachers to be the site where the Buddha preached the First Sermon.

d) *Objects of Interest* [6, 9]

(i) Chaukhandi

This is the first monument to be seen as one enters Sarnath. This mass of brickwork with an octagonal tower on top is what remains of an **ancient *stupa***. The tower was constructed to commemorate the visit of Hamuyan, father of Akbar Khan to Sarnath in 1588 AD. This site is believed to be the place where the Buddha **stopped** to let the Five Ascetics see him and welcome him as he entered the Deer Park.

(ii) Deer Park or Isipatana

A kilometre north is the famous **Migadaya** or Deer Park, also called **Isipatana** or Seer's Landing. Within its serene grounds are found all the sacred ancient monuments, namely:

(iii) Dhamek Stupa

This imposing *stupa* is cylindrical in shape, 28.5 m in basal diameter and 43.6 m tall. During the Gupta period, the lower portion was encased in stone, having beautiful carvings all round. The design consists of a broad band of *Swastikas* worked into different geometrical patterns, with a chiselled lotus wreath running above and below the *Swastikas.* While boring a shaft in the centre of the *stupa* in search of relics, Cunningham found remains of an earlier *stupa* of Mauryan bricks. It was probably the *stupa* raised by Asoka when he visited Sarnath. No bodily relics were found inside this *stupa,* but a slab with Buddha's creed, '*ye dhamma hetuppabhava, etc.*' in the characters of the 6^{th} and 7^{th} century was discovered. This appears to suggest its close association with the Buddha's ***dhamma***. According to an inscription of the Pala king Mahipala I (1026 AD), its original name was **Dhammacakka *stupa***. The Archeological

Survey of India used this finding to support its claim that this spot marks the **site of the First Sermon**. However, it is not possible to confirm this claim as two other places, namely: **Dhammarajika** *stupa* and the Gupta shrine of **Pancayatana**, are also believed by Burmese monks to be the site of the First Sermon. For the pilgrim, the best thing to do is to treat the whole area as the place of the First Sermon and to be **mindful** at all the holy shrines.

(iv) Dharmarajika Stupa

The ruins of the **Dharmarajika** *stupa* are a short distance north of the Dhamek *stupa,* and consists of a circular base of what remained after the wanton act of destruction by Jagat Singh. The original *stupa* built by King Asoka was **13.4 m** in diameter but was enlarged twice during the Gupta period so that the base we see today is larger. The Dhammarajika *stupa,* as its name indicates, was believed to be built by Asoka to enshrine the bodily relics of the Buddha at the time of his **re-distributing the relics** from the seven original *stupas* and enshrining them in a number of other *stupas* at different places. However, some Burmese monks are of the opinion that the Dhammarajika *stupa* marks the site of the First Sermon.

(v) Mulagandhakuti (Main Shrine)

North of the *Dhammarajika stupa* are the ruins of the Main Shrine, site of the **Mulagandhakuti** or **First Perfumed Chamber** where the Buddha spent the first rains-retreat. According to the Dhammapada Commentary, it was donated by the rich man **Nandiya** and as soon as the Buddha accepted the gift, a **celestial mansion** arose in Tavatimsa Heaven awaiting its owner, Nandiya. The main shrine was a square building, 18.3 m on each side, with the entrance facing east. The area between the ruins of the Main

Shrine and the Dharmarajika *stupa* is believed to be the site of the ***Cankama,*** the promenade where the Buddha did his **walking meditation**. This belief is supported by the discovery of the famous colossal ***Bodhisatta*** image installed at this site by *Bhikkhu* Bala of Mathura.

(vi) Asokan Pillar

A short distance to the west of Mulagandhakuti, under a flat roof and enclosed by railings, stands the 2 m high base of the **Asokan** pillar. The original pillar was 15 m high and surmounted by the famous **Lion Capital** which can be seen in **Sarnath Museum**. This pillar is believed to mark the site where the Buddha assembled the ***Sangha*** comprising sixty *Arahants* and exhorted them to go in different directions to spread the Teaching. On the pillar is an inscription, which says: "*Let no one cause a division in the Sangha*." During Asoka's time, *bhikkhus* from **many sects** lived in Sarnath and it is believed that he issued this ***Sanghabhedaka*** (Cause a Schism in the Order) **Edict** to promote harmony among the various Buddhist sects.

(vii) Sunken Shrine of Pancayatana

To the east of the Dhammarajika *stupa,* is a sunken shrine under a concrete platform. It is made of terra cotta bricks and modelled to resemble one of the four square temples of the Gupta period, called "*pancayatana*". The site of this sunken shrine of Pancayatana is believed by some monk teachers to be the place where the Buddha preached the **First Sermon** to the five ascetics. Being not as well known as the four main monuments of Sarnath, it has fewer visitors. As a result, it is a **quieter** and more conducive place for **meditation**.

(viii) Mulagandhakuti Vihara

About 500 m east of the Dhamek *stupa* stands the **Mulagandhakuti** ***Vihara,*** built by the Maha Bodhi Society of India in 1931 under the untiring efforts of **Anagarika Dharmapala**, whose mission was to make all the sacred Buddhist places in India come under the care of the *Sangha.* On the day of opening, the **sacred relics** of the Buddha unearthed in Taxila in 1913-14, were presented by the Director General of Archeology, representing the Government, to the Maha Bodhi Society. These Buddha relics were enshrined under the **Preaching Buddha** image and are taken out every year during *Kathina* for worship. The beautiful **Ajanta style frescoes** on both walls of the *vihara* were painted by a famous Japanese artist, **Kosetsu Nosu**. He took three years, from 1932-35, to complete the murals. A short distance outside the *vihara* is a newly constructed shrine with life-size images, depicting the Buddha's First Sermon to the Five Ascetics. At present, the abbot of Mulagandhakuti *Vihara* is Ven. Dr. **Dodangoda Rewata Thera**, Deputy General Secretary of the Maha Bodhi Society of India and author of the book, "The Lotus Path", describing the Eight Great Places of Pilgrimage.

(ix) Sarnath Archeological Museum (Closed on Fridays)

The museum houses **antiquities** recovered from the ruins at Deer Park during excavations from 1905 onwards. Inside the museum, numerous sculptures of the Buddha and *Bodhisatta,* mostly of the **Gupta** period (4^{th}-5^{th} century AD) are displayed. The four most important sculptures on display are described as follows:

• *Lion Capital*

On entering the main hall, one sees the most magnificent sculpture of **Mauryan** art – the **Lion Capital**, which once crowned the Asokan Pillar at Deer Park. This polished sandstone sculpture

is 2.3 m tall and consists of **four lions** sitting back to back on a **circular abacus** about 0.3 m high. The abacus has **four running animals**, each separated by a ***Dhammacakka* wheel** on its side, namely: **Bull** representing the Buddha's birth sign; **Elephant** representing his conception as Maya Devi dreamt that an elephant entered her womb; **Horse** representing the *Bodhisatta's* renunciation as he left home on his horse Kanthaka; **Lion** representing his First Sermon. The **four lions** that surmount the Capital represent the **roar of the Buddha** in the four directions. The Lion Capital is the **crest** of India and the *Dhammacakka* Wheel is the emblem of its national flag.

• ***Colossal Bodhisatta Image***

This colossal standing image is of **red sandstone** donated by the *bhikkhu* Bala in 81 AD during the reign of King Kaniska and represents the best tradition of Mathuran art. Behind the statue is a stone shaft, which once supported a beautifully **carved umbrella**. The stone umbrella can also be seen in the main hall.

• ***Buddha's Life Panels***

There is a sculptured panel showing the **four principal** events, namely: Birth, Enlightenment, First Sermon and *Mahaparinibbana* of the Lord Buddha. Another panel illustrates the **eight events** in the life of the Buddha, namely, the four principal events and the four **miracles** – the great miracle at **Sravasti**, the descent from Heaven at **Sankasya**, the taming of the drunken elephant Nalagiri at **Rajagaha** and the offering of honey to the Buddha by the monkeys at **Vesali**.

- ***Preaching Buddha Image***

The seated Buddha image in ***Dhammacakka mudra*** or **Preaching** posture is one of the most beautiful creations of **Gupta art**. This famous sculpture was a gift of **King Kumaragupta** who ruled from 414-455 AD. The halo around the head is carved with floral designs and has two celestial figures on both upper corners. Inset at the bottom are **seven figures**, representing the Five Ascetics plus the Queen and her son in kneeling position, paying homage to the *Dhammacakka* wheel. A picture of this sculpture can be seen on the cover of Ven. K. Sri Dhammananda's book, "The *Dhammapada*".

(x) Mahabodhi Society

The credit for restoring Sarnath into a living shrine goes to **Anagarika Dharmapala**, founder of the Maha Bodhi Society of India. He established the Mahabodhi Society in Sarnath, which is located on the left of the **Mulagandhakuti Vihara**, which it oversees, in addition to the Mahabodhi schools, college, library and training school for monks and nuns. Lately the Society has constructed a hospital to cater for the poor patients around Sarnath.

(xi) Temples and Monasteries in Sarnath

There are several modern temples and monasteries for the pilgrim to visit in Sarnath, namely: the **Burmese** *vihara,* **Chinese** temple, **Japanese** temple, **Korean** temple, **Thai** temple and three **Tibetan** monasteries. The Burmese monastery is called the **Dhammacakka Vihara** and was established by **Ven. Chandramani** of Kushinagar. The present abbot is **Ven. U Wannadhaza**, a Burmese Sayadaw, who has been in Sarnath for many years. Lately, the *vihara* has added a new wing to accommodate pilgrims visiting Sarnath.

4. *Kusinara, Place of the Buddha's Passing Away*

a) *How to reach there*

Kusinara or Kushinagar is in the village of **Kasia** in the Deoria district of Uttar Pradesh. The nearest town is **Gorakhpur**, 55 km away. By road, Kushinagar is 130 km south of **Lumbini**, 250 km east of **Sravasti** and 250 km north of **Patna**. All distances are approximate. There are now two good hotels for pilgrims to stay in at Kushinagar.

b) *Religious Significance* [1, 2, 3]

Three months before he reached the age of **eighty**, the Buddha renounced his will to live at the Capala Shrine in **Vesali**. Travelling in stages via **Pava** where he ate his **last meal**, offered by the smith **Cunda**, he reached the final resting-place at the ***Sala* grove** of the **Mallas** by the bank of the **Hirannavati** river in **Kushinagar**. There, on the full-moon day of ***Wesak*** in **543 BC**, the Buddha passed into *Mahaparinbbana,* the passing away into *Nibbana* wherein the elements of clinging do not arise (i.e. no more rebirth). His last convert was the wandering ascetic **Subhadda** and his last words to the *bhikkhus* were:

> *"Handa 'dani bhikkhave amantayami vo: Vaya-dhamma sankhara. Appamadena sampadetha."*

(**Translation:** "Indeed, *bhikkhus*, I declare this to you: It is the nature of all conditioned things to perish. Accomplish all your duties with mindfulness.")

The Buddha was lying on his right side between two **Sala trees** with his head to the north when he breathed his last. After his *Mahaparinibbana,* his body was taken into the town by the northern gate and out through the eastern gate to the shrine of the Mallas called the **Makutabandhana**. They were unable to light the funeral pyre until Ven. **Maha Kassapa** came and paid his respects. After the cremation, the **relics** were divided into **eight** equal portions by the brahmin **Dona**, who distributed them to **eight clans**, namely:

- King **Ajatasattu** of Magadha,
- the **Licchavis** of Vesali,
- the **Sakyans** of Kapilavatthu,
- the **Bulians** of Allakappa,
- the **Koliyans** of Ramagama,
- the brahman of **Vethadipa**,
- the **Mallas** of Pava, and
- the **Mallas** of Kushinagar.

Dona himself kept the **urn** used for dividing the relics. When the **Moriyas** of Pipphalavana arrived, it was too late as all the relics had been distributed, so they took from there the **ashes**. Returning home, these men raised *stupas* to honour them. So it came about that there were eight *stupas* for the relics, a ninth for the **urn**, and a tenth for the **ashes**.

c) *Historical Background* [6, 9, 20]

In those days, Kushinagar was described by Ven. Ananda as *"this little mud-walled town, this back-woods town, this branch township"*. After the *Mahaparinibbana* of the Buddha, it became an important religious centre as Buddhism spread in India. As one of the four

pilgrimage places mentioned by the Buddha, it attracted devout Buddhists from all over India and abroad. **King Asoka** visited Kushinagar in 249 BC and raised several *stupas* and pillars at the site. But by the time **Hsüan Tsang** visited Kushinagar in 637 AD, the place was in ruins and its towns and villages waste and desolate with few inhabitants. He saw the *Sala* trees under which the Buddha passed into *Mahaparinibbana,* the *vihara* containing the **Reclining Buddha** image and beside it the 61 m tall ***stupa*** built by Asoka-raja, in a ruinous state with a **stone pillar** in front. Further to the north, after crossing the Hirannavati river was a *stupa* marking the **cremation site.** Yet Kushinagar continued to be a living shrine until the 12th century AD, but after the Muslim conquest of India it became deserted and eventually fell into ruins and was forgotten.

In 1861-62, **Cunningham** visited the ruins of **Kasia** and identified the place as the site of the Buddha's *Mahaparinibbana.* In 1876, his assistant **Carlleyle** carried out extensive excavations, which completely exposed the **Main *stupa*** and discovered right at its front the famous **Reclining Buddha** image buried among the ruins of an oblong shrine. More excavations continued until 1912 and yielded datable finds which showed the continuous occupation of Kushinagar up to the 12th century AD.

In recent times, the **first Buddhist** to occupy Kushinagar was the **Venerable Mahavira**, an Indian national who was ordained as a monk in Sri Lanka, in 1890. He was responsible for restoring Kushinagar back to its rightful place as a sacred shrine. Ven. Mahavira repaired the main temple and built a *vihara* and *Dhamma* hall in 1902-03. After him came the **Venerable Chandramani** from **Akyab** township in Arakan, Myanmar, who was ordained as a monk in Chittagong in 1903. He continued the good work of his predecessor by gaining possession of the *Mahaparinibbana* Temple,

establishing educational institutions for the local people and reviving the tradition of ***Buddha Jayanti***, which was celebrated for the first time in Kushinagar in 1924. Ven. Chandramani passed away in 1972 and was succeeded by his disciple, **Ven. Gyaneshwar**, a Myanmar monk who continues the noble task of taking care of the holy site.

d) *Objects of Interest* [9, 20]

(i) Mahaparinibbana Temple

The present Temple was built by the Indian Government in **1956** as part of the Commemoration of the 2500th year of *Mahaparinibbana* or **2500 BE** (Buddhist Era). The old temple restored by **Carlleyle** was too small to accommodate the increasing number of pilgrims visiting it. Inside this temple, one can see the famous **Reclining Buddha** image lying on its **right side** with the head to the **north**.

The statue is 6.1 m long and rests on a 7.3 m long stone couch. On the front side of the couch are three sculptures, believed to represent Ven. **Ananda** near the feet, Ven. **Subhadda** at the middle and Ven. **Dabba Malla** at the other corner. At the centre is an inscription of the 5th century AD, which states the statue was "*a gift of the monk Haribala to the Mahavihara*" and that "*it was fashioned by Dinna*". This 1,500-year old Reclining Buddha image was executed out of one block of red sandstone brought in from **Mathura** during the **Gupta** period. It was **Carlleyle** who discovered it in 1876 in a dilapidated condition and successfully pieced together the fragments found scattered about. This statue bears the 32 marks of the Great Man (*Mahapurisa*) and can evoke different feelings in one's mind, depending on where one stands to look at it.

- In **front** of the face, one can discern a **smiling mood** in the face.
- Near the **middle** part of the body, one can discern a mood of **suffering**.
- At the **feet**, one can discern the **calm** and **serenity** in the face.

(ii) Mahaparinibbana or Nirvana Stupa

This *stupa* beside the *Mahaparinibbana* Temple is a restoration of the **Main *stupa*** exposed during excavations by Carlleyle in 1876. When examined to a depth of 4.3 m, it revealed a copper plate and other objects from the Gupta period. The inscription on the plate in Sanskrit mentioned that the objects were deposited in the **Nirvana *stupa*** by the monk **Haribala**. Hsüan Tsang, who came in 637 AD, mentioned that the Nirvana *stupa* was built by Asoka. He also saw in front of it a stone pillar to record the ***Nirvana of Tathagata*** but it bore no date. The Nirvana *stupa* is believed to be erected originally by the Mallas to enshrine the Buddha's relics and subsequently enlarged by **King Asoka** and later during the **Gupta period**. It is likely that the Nirvana *stupa* was built on the site where the Buddha passed into *Mahaparinibbana* for devotees to worship long before Buddha images came into existence, although another theory puts the Buddha's *Mahaparinibbana* at the site of the Reclining Buddha. The *Mahaparinibbana stupa* was renovated in 1927 with donations of a Myanmar, **U Po Kyo**, and is 23 m tall.

(iii) Matha Kuwara Shrine

After eating the last meal offered by the **smith Cunda**, the Buddha became sick. According to the commentary, although the distance from Pava to Kushinagar was 3 *gavutas* or about 10 km, it took great effort and the Buddha had to **stop** at **25 places** to rest. Thus comes sickness to a man, crushing all his health. As he wanted to

point out this fact, the Buddha spoke these words which aroused **religious urgency** (*samvega*): "***I am wearied and would rest awhile.***" At the last place of rest, 400 metres before reaching the *Upavanatta Sala* grove, the Buddha had to ask Ven. Ananda **three times** before the latter would go to the nearby stream to fetch him some water to drink. The reason why Ven. Ananda did not go at first was because many carts had crossed the stream, making the water muddy and dirty. After the third request, Ven. Ananda went to the stream and found that its water had turned clear and potable.

This place is called **Matha Kuwara** and a shrine has been erected and installed with a colossal **Buddha** image in earth-touching-posture (*bhumi-phassa-mudra*). The 3.05 m tall statue is carved out of one block of blue stone and is about 1,000 years old. The name 'Matha Kuwara' literally means 'forehead prostration', which is what devotees do when they visit this shrine. The present temple was built in 1927 out of donations of two Myanmar devotees, **U Po Kyo** and **U Po Hlaing**. It is located 0.4 km south-west of the *Mahaparinibbana* Temple.

(iv) Cremation Stupa or Makutabandhana Cetiya

After paying homage to the body of the Buddha for six days, the Mallas carried it to the **Makuta-bandhana**, the traditional place for crowning their chieftains, where they cremated it. The cremation ceremony is described in Part VI of the ***Mahaparinibbana Sutta***, which also describes the partitioning of the Buddha's relics by the brahmin Dona. The **Cremation *stupa*** was raised by the **Mallas** some time after the Buddha's cremation and repaired in the 3rd century BC by Asoka and again in the 5th century AD during King Kumaragupta's reign. When Cunningham visited the site in 1861-62, it was just a big mound. The hidden *stupa* was

subsequently exposed to reveal a circular drum 34 m in diameter resting on a 47 m diameter platform. During excavations, a large number of **clay seals** inscribed with Buddhist verses were discovered which confirmed that it was the **cremation site**. It is about **1.6 km east** of the Matha Kuwara Shrine along the main road. In recent times, the area around the Cremation *stupa* has been planted with grass and is well maintained for the benefit of pilgrims.

(v) Buddhist Monasteries in Kushinagar

In recent times there have been some developments in Kushinagar with the construction of several monasteries and other modern facilities for pilgrims. While in Kushinagar, pilgrims should visit the *viharas,* namely: Chinese Monastery, Japan-Sri Lanka Buddhist Temple, Myanmar *Vihara* and Tibetan Monastery, to pay their respects and seek assistance from the monks there to learn more about the holy site.

Part III

Four Places of Miracles

CONTENTS

1. *Savatthi, Place of the Twin Miracle*

a) *How to reach there*

Savatthi or Sravasti is located in the Bahraich district of Uttar Pradesh, 160 km east of the capital Lucknow. The site is 21 km west of Balrampur, a station on the Gorakhpur-Gonda line of the North-Eastern Railway. All distances are approximate.

b) *Religious Significance* [1, 2]

Sravasti was the ancient capital of the Kingdom of **Kosala** ruled by King **Pasenadi**, a lay disciple and great admirer of the Buddha. It owes its fame to its **long** and **close association** with the Buddha's ministry. Of the 45 years of his ministry, the Buddha spent as many as 25 rains-retreats, 24 of them continuously (21^{st}-44^{th}) at Sravasti. It was here that the millionaire **Sudatta**, popularly known as **Anathapindika** or "Feeder of the Poor", donated the famous **Jetavana** or **Jeta's Grove** to the Buddha after he had bought it at an exorbitant price, which was "as many gold coins as would cover it". Since the Buddha spent a major part of his missionary life in Sravasti, the majority of sermons in the scriptures were delivered while staying in Jetavana. Another important monastery at Sravasti was the **Pubbarama**, donated by the **Lady Visakha**, chief benefactress of the Buddha.

Sravasti became an important place of pilgrimage because here the Buddha performed the greatest miracle of all, the **Twin Miracle**, in order to dispel the heretics. In a series of miraculous episodes, the Buddha created **multiple representations** of Himself, seated and standing on lotuses, causing **fire** and **water** to emanate from

his body. This marvelous event, called the **Miracle of Sravasti**, is a favourite subject of Buddhist sculptures.

c) *Historical Background* [6, 9]

King Asoka visited Sravasti in 249 BC as part of his pilgrimage to the holy Buddhist shrines and erected two pillars, each 70 feet high, on both sides of the eastern gate of Jetavana, as well as some *stupas* to enshrine the relics of the Buddha. During the time of the Kusana kings, **Kaniska** and **Huviska**, in the 1st-2nd century AD, new shrines were installed to enshrine **Buddha images** which were becoming popular at the time. When Fa Hsien visited Sravasti in 407 AD, Buddhism had declined in the city but Jetavana was still occupied by monks. He saw the two **Asokan pillars** still standing but the ***stupas*** of Angulimala and Sudatta were in ruins. By the time Hsüan Tsang came to Sravasti in 637 AD, the main city was in ruins and there were several hundreds of ***sangharamas***, mostly in ruin with very few religious followers. **Jetavana** was decayed and deserted. He also saw both columns erected by Asoka, the ruins of *stupas, sangharamas* and the well from which the Buddha used to draw water for his use.

After Hsüan Tsang's visit, Jetavana was again occupied, as evidenced by the recovery of seals and images of Mahayanist pantheons such as Lokanatha, Avalokitesvara and others belonging to the 8th and 9th century AD. The last patrons of Jetavana were King Govindachandra and his devout Buddhist wife **Kumaradevi** of Kanauj and Benares (1130 AD). Records of their gift of six villages to the *Sangha* of Jetavana monastery were found in a copper charter discovered during excavation of the ruins. With the downfall of Buddhism in India in the 13th century AD, the Jetavana shrines became deserted and fell into oblivion.

In 1863, **Cunningham** identified a vast collection of twin ruins called **Sahet-Mahet** with the ancient city of Sravasti. He excavated the ruins at **Sahet** covering **13 hectares**, identified with **Jetavana** and exposed the remains of several *stupas,* temples and monasteries, including the site of the famous ***Gandha-kuti*** or Perfumed Chamber as well as the **Kosambi *kuti***, both used by the Buddha. Most of the ruins exposed in Jetavana were from the **Kusana period** (1st-2nd century AD). The ruins at **Mahet** are very extensive, spreading over **162 hectares**. Only a few ruins have been identified while most parts of it are still unexplored. In recent times, the first monastery to be built in Sravasti was the **Burmese *Vihara***, at the initiative of Ven. **Chandramani** of Kushinagar. This was followed by the **Chinese** Buddhist Temple founded by the Ven. **Ren Chen**. In 1969, the Maha Bodhi Society of India became directly involved with Sravasti with the arrival of Ven. **Sangharatana** of Sarnath, who initiated the construction of the **Nava Jetavana Vihara** just outside the old Jetavana. In 1982, the **Thais** too, established a *vihara* in Sravasti.

d) *Objects of Interest* [6, 9]

Jetavana Park

During the Buddha's time, the place was called *Jetavana Anathapindika Arama* or **Anathapindika's Garden of Jeta Grove**. Today most of the ruins are the remains of temples and *stupas* from the Kusana period (1st-2nd century AD). The important shrines are:

(i) Temple No. 2

The ruins here mark the site of the ***Gandha-kuti*** (Perfumed Chamber) built by Anathapindika for the Buddha's use. According to the commentaries, the **site** of the Buddha's **bed** in it is the **same**

for all Buddhas, irrespective of the size of the *Gandha-kuti*. The original *Gandha-kuti* was wooden but by the time the Chinese pilgrims saw it, the structure was a two-storeyed brick building in a ruinous condition. Now only the low walls and stone platform are extant. This is a favourite site for pilgrims to perform ***puja*** and **meditate**.

(ii) Temple No. 3

This temple is believed to be the site of the original **Kosambi *kuti***, also built by Anathapindika earlier for the Buddha's use as a meditation room. Just in front of it is a long plinth, made of bricks, marking the site of the original promenade (*cankama*) used by the Buddha for walking meditation.

(iii) Stupa H

This *stupa* is believed to mark the place where the Buddha used to preach to the monks and laity. It was erected in front of the *Gandha-kuti* Temple and was rebuilt several times, pointing to its importance as a sacred shrine.

(iv) Ananda Bodhi Tree

The Ananda *Bodhi* tree is located near the entrance of Jetavana. It was planted at the request of Anathapindika so that the laity would have an **object to worship** during the Buddha's absence from Savatthi to propagate the *Dhamma* after each *vassa*. When Ven. Ananda reported the matter to the Buddha, the latter replied that there were three types of objects of veneration, namely: the **corporeal relic** deposited in a *stupa* after the Buddha's *Parinibbana*, an **object used** by the Buddha such as his alms-bowl, etc. and a **visible symbol** such as a *Dhammacakka* wheel.

The first was not possible while the Buddha was alive, while the third object was not appropriate for those who were not content with a mere symbol or picture. So only the second remained and the Buddha suggested the ***Bodhi* tree** as the **best object to venerate** in his absence. So it was decided to plant a small shoot of the *Bodhi* tree from **Bodhgaya** and Ven. **Moggallana**, foremost in psychic ability, was assigned the task of obtaining the sapling. When it arrived, the young shoot was ceremoniously planted at the gate of Jetavana by **Anathapindika**. The tree grew and became an object of veneration to the laity. At the request of Ven Ananda, the **Buddha spent one night** meditating under it, adding sanctity to the tree. The present tree looks very old from its hoary appearance but it is not possible to confirm whether it is the original tree or a descendant of it.

(v) Sudatta Stupa

North of Jetavana, in the ruins of Mahet (old Sravasti) stands the **Sudatta *stupa***, the most imposing monument in the area. According to Fa Hsien, this *stupa* was built on the **foundations** of the **house** of **Sudatta**, popularly known as Anathapindika. The ruins show structural remains from the 1^{st}-12^{th} century AD. From the road, one has to climb up several flights of steps to reach the plinth, where one can see the **sunken basements** of two circular *stupas.*

(vi) Angulimala Stupa

Near the Sudatta *stupa* is a mass of bricks with a tunnel in the middle, identified by Cunningham as the **Angulimala *stupa*** seen by the Chinese pilgrims. The tunnel was cut through the whole mound at the base to serve as a drain, helping to preserve the monument. According to Fa Hsien, the *stupa* marks the site where Angulimala was **cremated**.

(vii) Place where Devadatta Sank into the Earth

According to the *Dhammapada* commentary, after Devadatta created a schism in the *Sangha,* he left to form his own faction. Thereafter his fortune took a turn for the worse and eventually he fell sick for nine months. Knowing his end was near, he instructed his disciples to carry him to Jetavana to see the Buddha for the last time. When the Buddha heard about this, he predicted that Devadatta would not succeed in seeing him at all. As Devadatta was being carried in a litter, they passed a **lotus pond** outside Jetavana. Putting the litter down, his disciples went into the lotus pond to bathe. Devadatta arose from his litter and sat down, resting both feet on the ground whereupon his **feet sank** into the earth. By degrees he sank into the earth, first to his **ankles**, then to the **knees**, then to the **hips**, then to the **chest** and then to the **neck**. Before he was completely swallowed by the earth, he managed to verbally **take refuge** in the Buddha. Thereafter he was **reborn in *Avici* Hell** to suffer for his bad *kamma.* The place where Devadatta sank into the earth is believed to be the swampy area behind the Burmese *Vihara.*

(viii) Stupa of the Great Miracle

According to the commentaries, the Buddha ascended to ***Tavatimsa* Heaven** to preach to his mother during the 7th rains-retreat. Prior to his ascent, he had performed the **Twin Miracle** and other miraculous feats to **silence the heretics** at a place where the gardener **Ganda** had planted a mango tree. This place is believed to be at the top of a hillock near the Nikko Lotus Hotel as one enters Sravasti. In the year 2000, excavations were carried out on this hillock, which revealed the remains of a brick *stupa* believed to be erected by King Asoka. The area has now been fenced in to pro-

tect the ruins of the Miracle *stupa* on top of the hillock. This *stupa* is known locally as 'Orajhar'.

(ix) Burmese and Sri Lankan Monasteries

Pilgrims visiting Sravasti should visit both monasteries to pay their respects to the monks and find out more about the monuments from them. The Sri Lankan monastery is named **Nava (New) Jetavana Vihara** and inside it one can see beautiful murals on its walls depicting important events in the Buddha's life. The monastery also possesses some **Buddha relics**, which it keeps in a *stupa*-shaped vessel to show to visiting pilgrims. The Burmese *vihara* is named the Burmese Buddhist Temple and the abbot is the Venerable **Sayadaw U Awbatha**. According to the Sayadaw, although the temple is situated outside the fenced-in Jetavana Park, its precincts were once part of the old Jetavana grove. The Burmese *vihara* has been recently renovated and now offers free accommodation to pilgrims who visit Sravasti.

2. *Sankasia, Place of the Descent from Heaven*

a) *How to reach there*

Sankasia is located in the village of Sankisa-Basantapur in Farrukhabad district of Uttar Pradesh, where the borders of Farrukhabad, Etah and Mainpuri districts meet. From Delhi, the most practical way to visit Sankasia is to take the **Shatabdhi express** from Delhi to **Etawah**, arriving there at about 10.30 am and **transfer** to a coach. Immediately after lunch, one should proceed by coach via **Kishni-Bewar-Muhammadabad** to Sankasia arriving there at about three in the afternoon. After visiting Sankasia, one should travel via **Chhibramau-Kannauj** to Kanpur. Distance from Sankasia to Kanpur is about 220 km and the journey is expected to take 5 hours. Time of arrival at the hotel is estimated at 10 pm.

b) *Religious Significance* [1, 2, 4]

According to *Dhammapada* Commentary XIV, 2, after the Buddha had completed the rains-retreat in Tavatimsa Heaven, he informed Sakka of his intention to return to earth. Thereupon, Sakka created **three ladders;** one of gold, one of jewels and one of silver, the tops of which rested on the summit of Mt. Sumeru and the feet of which rested against the gate of the city of Sankasia. On the **right** side was the **golden ladder** for the ***devas***, on the **left** side was the **silver ladder** for ***Brahma*** and his train, and in the **middle** was the **jewelled ladder** for the **Buddha**. As the Buddha descended upon the jewelled ladder, the *devas* and *Brahmas* honored him by accompanying him on each side. With this retinue the Buddha

descended and set foot on earth at the gate of the city of Sankasia. Because of this **miraculous event** which was witnessed by a great multitude, Sankasia became an important **Buddhist shrine** and several *stupas* and *viharas* were erected there.

c) *Historical Background* [6, 9]

King Asoka visited Sankasia as part of the itinerary of his pilgrimage in 249 BC. According to **Fa Hsien**, Asoka built a **shrine** over the **spot** where the **Buddha set foot** on earth. Behind the shrine, he raised a stone column 18.3 m high with a lion capital on top and on its four sides he placed Buddha images. Fa Hsien also saw other *stupas* and *viharas* where about 1,000 monks and nuns resided. When **Hsüan Tsang** arrived in 636 AD, he saw the great *sangharama* of beautiful construction, wherein lived 100 monks and religious laymen. He also saw the Asoka column 21 m high with carved figures on the four sides and around it, and mentioned the presence of some *stupas*. Other than these accounts of the Chinese pilgrims, the history of Sankasia remained blank for the next 1,200 years until **Cunningham** identified it with the modern village of **Sankisa-Basantapur** in the Farrukhabad District of Uttar Pradesh. The present village is situated on a 12.2 m high **plateau** within an area of 457 m by 305 m or roughly 14 hectares.

d) *Objects of Interest* [6, 9]

(i) Broken Asoka Column with Elephant Capital

The Elephant Capital that once surmounted the Asoka column is an important relic of the **3rd century BC**. It is kept in a fenced up pavilion. Nearby under a tree, is a **small shrine** with a standing

image of Lord Buddha, flanked by Brahma and Sakka to depict the Buddha's descent from Heaven.

(ii) Site where the Buddha Descended from Heaven

About 20 metres to the south of the Asokan pillar is a high mound composed of solid brickwork, which was once a Buddhist structure. According to Hsüan Tsang, when the ladders by which the Buddha descended from Heaven had disappeared, the neighbouring princes built up a new foundation on the ancient foundation (three ladders) resembling the old ones. There was a *vihara* on the foundation and close by its side was a stone column 21 m high, which was erected by Asoka-raja. After the disappearance of Buddhism from India, the *vihara* probably followed the same fate as many other Buddhist establishments and fell into ruins. On top of the foundation now is a small shrine dedicated to a Hindu goddess Visharidevi. It is believed that the Buddha **set foot at this place** when he descended from Heaven at Sankasia.

(iii) Burmese and Sri Lankan Viharas

The first Buddhist monk to reside in Sankasia was the late Ven. **Vijaya Soma** from Sri Lanka, who established a school there. It is indeed heartening to see **two Buddhist monasteries** now in Sankasia in spite of its remote location. The **Burmese** monastery was opened in the year 2000 while the **Sri Lankan** monastery was built a few years earlier. Pilgrims visiting Sankasia should visit these monasteries to pay their respects to the *bhikkhus,* whose presence has enhanced the sanctity of this rural environment.

3. *Rajgir, Place of Taming the Drunken Elephant, Nalagiri*

a) *How to reach there*

Rajgir is situated in the Nalanda district of Bihar, **70 km** north-east of Bodhgaya and **102 km** south of Patna. All distances are approximate.

b) *Religious Significance* [1, 2, 4]

Rajgir is the modern name of **Rajagaha** or "**royal abode**", an appropriate designation for a place that had remained as the **capital** of the powerful kingdom of **Magadha** for centuries. In the Buddha's time, the ruler was King **Bimbisara**, who was later usurped by his parricidal son, **Ajatasattu**. In his first meeting with the ***Bodhisatta,*** Bimbisara was so impressed by his royal bearing that he offered to share his kingdom with the *Bodhisatta.* The latter, who had just renounced his Sakyan kingdom in search of the **Deathless**, declined the offer but promised to return to visit Rajgir after he had attained his goal. Soon after dispatching the *Sangha* to spread the *Dhamma* from **Sarnath**, the Buddha traveled to **Uruvela**, where he converted the **Kassapa brothers** and their matted-hair disciples, who all attained ***Arahantship.*** With this retinue of one thousand *Arahants,* the Buddha entered Rajgir, where he was warmly received by Bimbisara, who became a lay follower and offered the famous **Bamboo Garden** (***Veluvana)***, to the Buddha and the *Sangha.*

As the capital of a powerful state, Rajgir was a hive of secular and religious activities. According to the *Samannaphala Sutta,* many heretical teachers operated in Rajgir, namely: Purana Kassapa,

Makkhali Gosala, Ajita Kesakambali, Pakudha Kaccayana, Nigantha Nattaputta and Sanjaya Belatthaputta. Among the disciples of **Sanjaya** were two rich brahmins, **Upatissa** and **Kolita**, popularly known as **Sariputta** and **Moggallana** respectively. Both joined the *Sangha* after their conversion by the *Arahant* **Assaji**, and became the Buddha's first and second **Chief Disciples**. Following their conversion, many ***paribbajakas*** or wandering ascetics also became followers of the Buddha. Among the laity, the most notable disciples were the royal physician **Jivaka**, adopted son of Prince Abhaya; and the millionaire **Upali**, a follower of Nigantha Nattaputta, who was sent to convert the Buddha but ended up as a lay disciple instead. Thus Rajgir became an important **centre** of Buddhism as the **fame** of the Buddha **spread** throughout **Magadha**.

Rajgir was also the scene of many attempts by **Devadatta** to **kill** the Buddha over the leadership of the *Sangha.* First he hired archers to **assassinate** the Buddha, but they were all converted by the Buddha instead. Next, as the Buddha was walking up the slopes of Gijjhakuta (Vulture Peak) one day, Devadatta **hurled a rock** from the summit at the Buddha but it missed and a splinter **wounded** the Buddha's foot. Finally, he caused the elephant **Nalagiri** to be intoxicated with liquor and sent the ferocious beast to charge at the Buddha. But the Buddha **subdued** the animal with his **loving kindness**. Because of this miracle, Rajgir became sanctified as an important pilgrimage site. While Devadatta was plotting against the Buddha, **Ajatasattu**, at his instigation, usurped the throne and imprisoned his father in order to starve him to death. He regretted his actions too late, as his father had died before he could release him. Ajatasattu, later at the suggestion of **Jivaka**, sought the Buddha's advice and became a **lay disciple**. After the Buddha's *Mahaparinibbana,* he led an army to Kusinara to claim a share

of the Buddha's relics. He was the patron of the **First Sangiti** or Council held at **Sattapanni Cave** in Rajgir.

(c) *Historical Background* [6, 9, 21]

Rajgir lost its political status after Ajatasattu's son, **Udayibhadda**, **slew** his father and **transferred** the capital to **Pataliputta**. But the fact that Asoka erected a *stupa* and a stone pillar with an elephant capital during his pilgrimage to Rajgir, shows that the place remained as an important Buddhist centre for centuries. When **Fa Hsien** came during the fifth century he found the old city desolate, but outside the hills at **Veluvana** he found a band of monks living in the monastery. When **Hsüan Tsang** visited Rajgir in 637-638 AD, it was practically deserted. Of the ancient monasteries and *stupas* he found only foundation walls and ruins standing. He saw the **Asoka *stupa*** which was 18.3 m high and by the side of it, the **Asokan pillar**, about 15.2 m high with an elephant capital, the **Pippala** stone house said to be the cave of **Mahakassapa** and the **Sattapanni** caves. He also visited **Gijjhakuta** and saw a **brick *vihara*** at the western end of the hill and several ***stupas*** in the vicinity.

Although there is no record of Rajgir after Hsüan Tsang's visit, the antiquities recovered from Rajgir during archeological excavations in 1905-06 showed that it continued to be a popular Buddhist shrine up to the 12th century AD. According to Fa Hsien, Ajatasattu built a new citadel outside the circle of five hills, namely: **Vebhara**, **Pandava**, **Vepulla**, **Gijjhakuta** and **Isigili;** that encircled the **old Rajagaha** city. The modern village of Rajgir encloses a part of this "**New Rajagaha**" which was protected by a massive wall of earth resembling an irregular pentagon in shape, with a circuit of 5 km. On the south, towards the hills, one can still see the stone

fortifications that once protected the old city. The wall is 4.6 m to 5.5 m thick and rises to a height of 3.4 m at some places.

d) *Objects of Interest* [6, 9, 21]

(i) Veluvana (Bamboo Grove) and Karanda Tank

When King Bimbisara heard that the Buddha had come to Rajgir with a retinue of one thousand *Arahants,* he went to the **Sapling Grove** to meet the Buddha and was converted by the Buddha, attaining the **First Stage of Sainthood**. Thereafter, he invited the Buddha to his palace for the following day's meal, after which he donated the famous **Bamboo Grove** or ***Veluvana***, the first donation of a park (*arama*), to the Buddha and *Sangha.*

When the writer first visited Veluvana in 1991, the place was slightly overgrown with bushes and on the south side towards the hot springs a number of Muslim tombs could be seen on a large mound to the left of the main entrance. The cemetery is believed to be the site of the **Veluvana *Vihara*** built by Bimbisara for the Buddha's residence. The whole area has been cleaned up and Veluvana now looks like a pleasant park, planted with shade trees, bamboo and flowers, reflecting its original status as the royal park of King Bimbisara. In the vicinity of Veluvana is a large pond with a Buddha image at the centre. This pond is believed to be the site of the **Karanda** tank mentioned in Buddhist text as the ***Karanda kanivapa*** where the Buddha used to take his bath.

(ii) Pippala House

A short distance from Veluvana, at the foot of **Vebhara** hill, are the hot springs of Rajgir, a popular picnic spot for bathing. A little above the hot springs, on the right side of the path uphill, is a

remarkable **stone structure** known locally as the "**machan**" (watch-tower). The structure is roughly cube-shaped with dimensions of 26 m long by 25 m wide by 7 m high and is built of unhewn blocks of stone set on the rock. According to **Sir John Marshall**, who excavated the site in 1905-06, the structure was originally a **watch-tower** and "in after times, when no longer required for defensive purposes, they would afford convenient cells for ascetics to meditate in". This structure is believed to be the **Pippala stone house**, residence of **Ven. Maha Kassapa**, **Convenor** of the **First Council**. According to ***Samyutta* V, 78**, the **Buddha** visited Maha Kassapa on one occasion when the latter was ill and expounded the **Seven Factors** of **Enlightenment**, upon hearing which Maha Kassapa recovered from the illness.

(iii) Sattapanni caves

The **Sattapanni** caves, site of the **First Buddhist Council** held three months after the *Mahaparinibbana* in 543 BC, is situated on top of **Vebhara** hill, beyond the largest Jains temple. There a narrow foot-path descends some 30 m to a **long artificial terrace** in front of a line of **six caves** (there might have been seven originally). The caves have been sealed off to ensure the safety of visitors. The terrace in front of the caves is about 36.6 m long and 10.4 m at the widest point and part of the retaining wall of large unhewn stones on the outer edge can still be seen. This place agrees with the description of Sattapanni found in the Pali texts, where **five hundred *Arahants*** convened to **codify** the Buddha's **Teaching.** Over the last 2,500 years a lot of erosion would have taken place, so the terrace was probably bigger in those days, to accommodate so many *Arahants.*

(iv) Bimbisara Jail

About 2½ km south of Veluvana beside the main road is an area about 60 m square enclosed by the remains of a stone wall 2 m thick. This area has been identified as the **prison** in which **Bimbisara** was **jailed** by his son Ajatasattu, who usurped the throne. It is said that from this prison the king could see the Buddha up in Gijjhakuta, the sight of whom provided great joy to the prisoner.

(v) Jivaka's mango garden (Jivaka ambavana)

According to Pali sources, **Jivaka's mango garden** is situated between the city's **East Gate** and **Gijjhakuta**, and the site has been identified a short distance from the foot of Gijjhakuta. According to the Vinaya Texts, **Jivaka Komarabhacca** was the adopted son of **Prince Abhaya**, who found him **alive** (*jivati*) in a dust heap when he was an infant and raised him up. When he was old enough, he set out for Taxila to study medicine for seven years. To test his **knowledge**, his teacher asked him to go all round Taxila to search for any plant which was not medicinal and bring it back. Jivaka proved to be so proficient in medicinal plants that he returned after a long search and declared that he had not seen any plant that was not medicinal within a ***yojana*** (13 km) of Taxila.

Returning to Rajgir, he cured many people suffering from serious ailments and even performed surgery, something unheard of in those days. He became the **leading physician** and **surgeon** of Rajgir and earned **great wealth** through his medical practice. At some point in his career, he became a **lay disciple** and used to attend on the Buddha three times a day. When the Buddha's foot was **injured** by a splinter from a rock hurled by Devadatta, it was Jivaka who attended on him and **healed the wound**. Realizing the advantages of having a monastery near his home, Jivaka built one

on his extensive mango garden and donated it to the Buddha. The site of this monastery was **excavated recently**, which exposed the buried foundations of elliptical buildings, possibly of monastic nature, of an early date.

(vi) Gijjhakuta (Vulture Peak)

Gijjhakuta hill was the **favourite resort** of the Buddha and the scene of many **important discourses** while he was in Rajgir. To reach the top, one has to climb up a long **stone stairway**, 6.1 m to 7.3 m wide, called the **Bimbisara road**, built by the King to enable him to reach the summit to see the Buddha. The rocky path ends near the top of the hill where one can see **two natural caves** believed to be used by **Ven. Sariputta** and **Ven. Ananda**. At the summit, one can see the huge granite **rock formation** resembling a **vulture** standing with folded wings, from which the hill derived its name. Recently, a cement staircase has been constructed to facilitate the pilgrim's climb to the top, which is a **flat terrace** surrounded by a low retaining wall with a shrine near the precipice. This spot offers a **commanding view** of the valley below. It is a favourite place for pilgrims to perform **puja** or **circumambulate** while reciting the virtues of the Buddha. Nearby is another **smaller cave** believed to be used by **Ven. Moggallana**.

(vii) Maddakucchi (Rub-belly)

The Pali name ***maddakucchi,*** which means "**rub-belly**", was derived from a story that at this place the queen of Bimbisara, knowing that she was carrying a **patricide**, tried to **abort** the **foetus** by a forcible massage of her belly. Maddakucchi, which finds mention in the Pali scriptures, is situated at the **base** of Gijjhakuta. It is believed to be the place where the Buddha was brought by **stretcher** after being **wounded** on the leg by a splinter of a big rock

hurled by Devadatta from the summit of Gijjhakuta hill. Formerly, this place contained a deer park and a monastery.

(viii) Burmese Monastery

The **Burmese monastery** standing on top of a hillock in New Rajgir was the first modern monastery established in Rajgir in 1958 by an old Theravada monk, **Sayadaw U Zayanta**. Recently a new shrine hall has been built to enshrine a sacred **Buddha relic**.

(ix) Ruins of Nalanda Mahavihara

The ruins of **Nalanda** ***Mahavihara*** were first excavated in 1871 by Sir Alexander Cunningham, who identified its site at the modern village of Bargaon on the basis of the accounts of the Chinese pilgrim, Hsüan Tsang. Located only **12 km from Rajgir**, the ruins extend over a vast area. The structures exposed represent only a part of the vast establishment and consist of **monastic sites**, ***stupa*** **sites** and **temple sites**. Lengthwise, they extend from south to north, the monasteries on the eastern flank and temples on the west. The monasteries were all built on more or less the same plan and to date at least eleven monastic sites and five main temple sites have been identified. The most prominent standing structure at Nalanda is the **Sariputta** ***stupa,*** erected in honour of the Chief Disciple, who was born and passed away in the nearby village of **Nalaka**.

4. *Vesali, Place of Offering of Honey by a Band of Monkeys*

a) *How to reach there*

Vesali or Vaishali is located around the village of Basrah in the Muzaffapur district of Bihar, 55 km north of Patna across the Ganges River. All distances are approximate.

b) *Religious Significance* [1, 2, 3]

Vesali or **Vaishali**, capital of the **Licchavis** or **Vajjis**, was the headquarters of the powerful Vajjian confederacy of eight clans, of whom the Licchavis and Videhans were the most important. It was the first republic in the world modelled on the ***Aparihaniya Dhamma***, or the seven conditions leading to welfare, which the Buddha taught to the Vajjians when he was dwelling at the **Saranda** shrine in Vaishali. Thus united, they became so powerful that **Ajatasattu** of Magadha had to resort to treachery by sending the brahmin **Vassakara** to sow discord among the Vajjian princes for three years in order to weaken them. By then, they were too disunited to defend their country and Ajatasattu conquered them.

The Buddha visited Vaishali several times, spending his 5th and 44th *vassas* there and many Licchavi nobles became his disciples. When Vaishali was plagued with **famine**, **disease**, and **evil spirits**, the Buddha was invited by the Licchavi nobles to help them alleviate the plagues. The Buddha then preached the ***Ratana Sutta*** (Jewel Discourse) and instructed **Ven. Ananda** to go around the city walls reciting it as a **Protection**. Thereafter, the Buddha recited it for seven days and all the plagues then abated. But the

event that elevated the status of Vaishali to an important pilgrimage site was the **offering** of a bowl of **honey** by a **band of monkeys** to the Blessed One, an incident mentioned among the **Four Great Miracles** in the Buddha's life.

At Vaishali, the Buddha allowed women to be admitted to the *Sangha* after **Ven**. **Ananda** successfully pleaded to the Buddha for the **ordination** of **Maha Pajapati Gotami** and several Sakyan ladies. The Buddha then decreed the **Eight Chief Rules**, in addition to the Disciplinary Code observed by monks, which *bhikkhunis* or nuns "should revere, reverence, honour and respect for life and which should not be transgressed". Thus the ***Bhikkhuni Sangha*** came to be established in Vaishali.

Once, the Buddha was staying in a mango grove of **Ambapali**, the chief courtesan of Vaishali, who invited him to a house *dana,* forestalling the Licchavi nobles who then offered her money in exchange for the invitation. But she politely declined their offer for she valued the *dana* more and after the meals even donated her **mango grove** to the Buddha and *Sangha.* The Buddha spent the **last *vassa*** in Vesali where he relinquished the will to live at the Capala shrine. After the *Mahaparinibbana,* the Licchavis obtained a share of the Buddha's relics from Kusinara and erected a **grand *stupa*** over the holy relics in Vaishali.

c) *Historical Background* [5, 6, 9, 22]

After the *Mahaparinibbana,* the **Vajjian confederacy** was **defeated** by **Ajatasattu**, whose son **Udayibhadda** slew his father and moved the capital from Rajgir to **Pataliputta**, across the Ganges river from Vaishali. According to the Mahavamsa (Great Chronicle of Ceylon), the dynasty of Udayibhadda was succeeded by three

generations of parricidal kings, namely: **Anuruddha**, **Munda** and **Nagadasa**, who each slew his own father to take over the throne. By then, the people could not tolerate this **dynasty of parricides**. Nagadasa was deposed by the minister **Sisunaga**, son of a Licchavi prince. Sisunnaga was succeeded by his son, **Kalasoka**, and by then a **hundred years** had passed since the *Mahaparinibbana*.

At that time in Vaishali, many shameless *bhikkhus* of the Vajji clan were practising the **Ten Points**, which were **not in conformity** with the *Vinaya* or monastic rules. The **Venerable Yasa** of Kosambi, while in Vaishali, noticed the **deviations** and strongly protested against them, resulting in his **expulsion** by the Vajji monks. Ven. Yasa, together with other monks appealed to **Ven**. **Revata** of Soreyya, the chief of the *Sangha* to settle the dispute. Thereupon, the **Second Council** was convened at **Valukarama** monastery in **Vaishali** during the reign of King **Kalasoka** and attended by **seven hundred *Arahants***. The **Venerable Sabbakami**, the most senior *Arahant,* questioned by Ven. Revata, adjudged the Ten Points as **unlawful** according to the *Vinaya*. Although the decision was accepted unanimously by the Council, the Vajjian monks did not accept the verdict. This resulted in a **schism** in the *Sangha* and the secession of the ***Mahasanghika*** (Vajji monks), who held a great assembly of their own called the ***Mahasangiti,*** from which the sect derived its name, and decided matters according to their own light. From then on, further schisms led to the formation of different subsects, and in the course of time, **eleven sub-sects** arose out of the ***Theravada*** while **seven** issued from the ***Mahasanghika,*** leading to the well-known **Eighteen Schools of Buddhism**.

Asoka, the Mauryan emperor who had his capital in **Pataliputta**, near Vaishali, raised a ***stupa*** in which he enshrined some of the Buddha's relics and erected beside it an Asokan column with a lion

capital when he visited Vaishali during his pilgrimage to the holy places in 249 BC. **Fa Hsien** visited Vaishali around 400 AD and mentioned the *stupas* built in its vicinity in honour of the Buddha. He also saw a *stupa* built at the site of the **Second Council** as well as a *stupa* built over half the remains of **Ven. Ananda**.

According to a story, when Ven. Ananda reached the age of 120 years he knew that his end was near and went from Rajgir to Vaishali, following the Buddha's example. Hearing of his intention, the citizens of **Magadha** and **Vaishali** hurried from both directions to bid him farewell. To do justice to both sides, Ven. Ananda levitated in the air and entered into the **Samadhi** of the **Fire Element**, whereby the body was consumed by **spontaneous combustion** and reduced to ashes, which fell on both sides. So the people of each city taking **half the relics**, returned and erected ***stupas*** over them.

Hsüan Tsang, who came in 630 AD, described Vaishali as covering an area of 26-31 sq. km, but it was in ruins. He saw the *stupa* built by the Licchavi princes over their portion of the Buddha's relics from Kusinara, the Asoka *stupa* and stone pillar surmounted by a lion capital and nearby the **pond** dug by a band of monkeys (*Markata-hrada*) for the Buddha's use. Not far to the south were two more *stupas;* one at the site where the monkeys, taking the **Buddha's alms-bowl**, climbed up a tree to **gather honey** and another at the site where the monkeys **offered honey** to the Blessed One. Hsüan Tsang wrote that both within and without and all around the city of Vaishali, the sacred monuments were so numerous that it was difficult to remember them all. After Hsüan Tsang's visit, the history of Vaishali remained **blank** for over **twelve centuries**. It lay in **ruins**, unknown and unheard of until the late 19th century, when **Cunningham** identified the ruins at and around **Basrah** in Muzaffapur district of Bihar with ancient

Vaishali. Today, most of the **principal ruins** are located in the village of **Kolhua**, about 55 km from Patna.

d) *Objects of Interest* [6, 9, 27]

(i) Raj Vishal ka Garh

Basrah, 35 km south-west of Muzaffarpur, has been identified as the site of the ancient city of Vaishali. The site of the **Raj Vishal ka Garh** is believed to represent the **citadel** of **Vaishali**, where the 7,707 rajas or representatives of the **Vajjian confederacy** used to meet and discuss the problems of the day. The ruins consist of a large brick-covered mound 2.5 m above the surrounding level and 1,500 m in circumference, with a 42.7 m moat surrounding it. Beside it is a pond believed to have been used by the Licchavi princes to take their bath. It is located about 3.2 km south-west of the Asokan pillar at Kolhua.

(ii) Relic Stupa of the Licchavis

About a kilometre to the north-west of the citadel stands an open shelter with a dome-shaped roof. Inside it are the remains of a *stupa,* which was originally a mud structure with thin layers of cloddy clay, 25 feet in diameter. It appeared to have undergone enlargement in which burnt bricks were used, increasing its diameter to 40 feet. The original mud *stupa* was a very old one, believed to be pre-Mauryan. From its primitive features and from the fact that a trench had been driven into its core in olden times, it is believed that this *stupa* is none other than the one **erected by the Licchavis** over their share of the relics of the Buddha. The trench was probably excavated by Asoka to reach the relics, some of which, according to Hsüan Tsang, were left in their original position by Asoka.

(iii) Asokan Pillar

At Kolhua, 3.2 km north-east of the citadel of Vaishali, stands the impressive **Asokan Pillar** erected by Asoka 2,250 years ago. It is a complete **monolithic** pillar of highly polished sandstone surmounted by a lion capital. The height is 6.7 m above the ground with a considerable portion sunk underground over the years. Though devoid of inscription, it appears to be a part of the line of pillars that Asoka erected along his **pilgrimage route** from **Pataliputta** to **Lumbini** during 250-249 BC. Around the Asokan Pillar at Kolhua are the ruins of many smaller brick *stupas.*

(iv) Asoka Stupa

Just near the Asokan pillar are the ruins of the **Asoka *Stupa*** seen by Hsüan Tsang. The **dome-shaped mound** is 4.6 m high and has a diameter of 20 m. During excavation by Cunningham, a stone casket containing some relics of the Buddha was found enshrined beneath it. This site is a conducive place to offer *puja,* followed by walking or sitting meditation at the *stupa.*

(v) Monkey's Tank (Markata-hrada)

Near the stone pillar is a small **tank** (pond) called Rama-kunda, identified by Cunningham with the ancient **monkey's tank** believed to have been **dug** by a colony of **monkeys** for the Buddha's use.

e) *Places of Interest in Patna* [6, 23]

(i) Kumhrar or Asokarama Park

This park in Patna is believed to be the site of the **Third Buddhist Council** held in **Pataliputta** in the 17th year of King Asoka's reign, about **236 years** after the *Mahaparinibbana.* It was attended by 1,000 *Arahants* and presided over by the Venerable **Moggaliputta**

Tissa. At this Council, the *Kathavatthu* or **Points of Controversy**, one of the seven books of the *Abhidhamma,* was compiled wherein the heretical doctrines were thoroughly examined and refuted. The Third Council marked a turning point for Buddhism which, prior to this, was confined mainly to **Magadha** and some neighbouring states. With **King Asoka** of the Mauryan empire reigning supreme over the whole **Indian sub-continent** as its chief patron, the time was now ripe for expansion. Accordingly, it was decided to send competent *Arahants* to propagate the Buddha's Teachings **all over India** as well as **Sri Lanka** in the **south**, **Kashmir** and **Gandhara** in the **north**, **Bengal** and **Burma** in the **east** and **Yonaka** and countries in the **west**. Thus the Teachings of the Buddha spread in the **four directions** after the Third Council.

At the **Kumhrar** one can see a large pool, where **32 ancient pillars** of polished sandstone were found, a specimen of which is exhibited at a nearby pavilion. Within the vicinity of the park is the site of a ***vihara*** of Asoka's time.

(ii) Patna Museum (Closed on Mondays)

The museum at Patna, capital of Bihar, where Buddhism originated, houses one of the **largest collections** of **ancient Buddhist antiquities** in the world. The sculptures of stone and bronze on display can be divided into a few distinct periods, namely:

- ***Mauryan Sculptures (4th-3rd century BC)***

On display here are Indian **stone sculptures** of highly polished sandstone in **magnificent** forms of **animals** such as the lion, bull and elephant capitals, fashioned to be placed atop **Asokan pillars**. Besides this refined courtly art, an archaic religious art based on

the widespread cult of **tutelary deities** is on display, featuring the gigantic **Patna yaksa** (*yakkha*) and **yaksi** (female *yakkha*).

• *Gandhara and Mathura Buddha Images*

Prior to the beginning of the Christian era, the Buddha was never represented in human form but only by symbols. The demand for Buddha images started when the movement of '**Bhakti**' or **devotion** gained strength among the **Buddhist laity** due to Mahayana influence. Buddha images came into existence in the **first century AD**, when two ancient schools of sculpture emerged separately – **Gandhara** (Afghanistan) in the far north-west of India and **Mathura** (Muttra) in the east.

In **Gandhara**, the Buddha-image is represented in **Grecian style**, almost **Apollo-like** in physical beauty and even the robe is sculpted with folds characteristic of Greco-Roman sculpture. The contours are not rounded off and great pains are taken to model the human form to display the **physical perfection** through **sharp**, **elegant** features. In **Mathura**, the sculptures are **indigenous**, in the ***Mahapurisa*** style, **large** and **rounded**. A typical example is *Bhikkhu* Bala's image of the *Bodhisatta* in Sarnath. The treatment of the Buddha's robe is schematic and clinging, so no folds are shown and the body is revealed as though it were nude. In Patna Museum one is able to see some rare specimens of Buddha and *Bodhisatta* images from Gandhara that survived destruction by Muslim fanatics when they conquered Northern India.

• *Gupta Period (AD 300-550)*

The **Gupta** period was the **golden age** of Indian art and the great Buddha images of Mathura, Sarnath, Ajanta and Bihar are magnificent specimens from this age. The Buddha images from

Mathura during this period underwent some **modifications** by the **Indo-Grecian** art mode. There is a large collection of Buddha-images from the Gupta period in this museum for one to admire.

- ***Pala Period (9th-12th century AD)***

During the **Pala** period metal images became increasing popular and elegant bronze Buddha images were produced in **Bihar**. For stone sculptures, **Nalanda** in Bihar state was famous for its distinctive **black slate Buddha images**. In Patna Museum there is a section showing black slate and bronze images of the Buddha and some bronze images of **Tantric deities** as the **cult of Tantrayana**, a decadent and perverse form of worship of deities unrelated to the Buddha's Teaching, emerged during the Pala Period.

Examples of Gandhara Sculpture from Calcutta Museum:



Birth of Gautama



Bodhisatta Padmapani

Part IV

Travelling to the Eight Great Places

CONTENTS

1. *Travelling to the Pilgrimage Places in India*

All the pilgrimage places described in this book are located in the Northern Indian states of **Uttar Pradesh** and **Bihar**, except Lumbini, which is in **Nepal**. In ancient times, this area was called *Puratthima* (Eastern Tract) but today it is known as the **Buddhist Circuit**. The majority of the Buddhist shrines are in remote places where taxi service and public transport are poor, making it difficult to get there unless one travels in a group by chartered bus. The capacity of the tour bus is normally **35 seats** and air-conditioning is provided at extra cost. The suggested group size is around **25 persons**, so that it is not too crowded. For a smaller group, an **18-seater** air-conditioned coach is also available.

For the first-time pilgrim, travelling in a group is the **best way** to visit the Eight Great Places for several reasons. First is the **convenience**, since all the **travelling arrangements** and **itinerary** would have been made by someone who has experience in the pilgrimage. Secondly, group travel provides **safety**, especially for female pilgrims. Lastly, and probably most important is the spirit of **Buddhist fellowship** among pilgrims travelling together, especially in the company of a **venerable monk** to act as a spiritual advisor, making the journey more pleasant and meaningful. A minor disadvantage of a group tour is that the **itinerary is less flexible**.

The **best time** to travel in Northern India is during **autumn/ winter**, from **November to February** when the weather is pleasant. From March to June, the weather is hot and dusty while from July to October, the rainy season sets in. By the end of October the weather turns dry and cool, the countryside is full of **greenery**

and travelling in Northern India is pleasant because of the **general cleanliness** of the land after the rains.

Precaution

One should always travel during the daytime for **safety reasons**, as the roads in the pilgrimage places are narrow and not lighted. Also, if the bus breaks down, it is easier to do repairs in the daytime.

2. *Suggested Itinerary*

When organizing a pilgrimage it is strongly advised to **exclude side trips** to other countries that might divert one's attention from the objectives of the pilgrimage. The temptation to take the opportunity to visit other countries along the way, such as Sri Lanka, Nepal or Myanmar, will arise but one should not cut down the duration of the pilgrimage to accommodate these side trips. If the duration is shortened, one **tends to rush** from place to place, giving rise to **impatience** and **dissatisfaction**, which is exactly the opposite of what one wishes to cultivate on a pilgrimage. In order to visit all the principal shrines in the Eight Great Places at a **comfortable pace**, it is advised that a **minimum of 12 days** be reserved for the pilgrimage. A suggested itinerary of 12 days, based on the writer's experience, is given below.

<u>Important</u>

a) On Day 2, from Etawah to Sankasia, use the state highway to Kishni-Bewar-Sankasia. From Sankasia to Kanpur, use the state highway to Chhibramau-Kanpur.

b) On Day 10, it is more convenient to travel by train from Patna to Calcutta, which takes 10 hours, compared with 14 hours from Patna to Delhi.

c) If the pilgrimage group is travelling with a venerable monk, it is advisable to carry **packed lunches** always when leaving the hotel in the morning. This will enable the venerable monk to have his meal before noon while on the road. Secondly, it will **save a lot of time** if members of the group eat at the same time as the venerable monk. Try as far as possible not to have lunch in the hotel, as it is usually **not ready**, and one has to **wait** for it to be prepared, thereby **losing precious time**.

12-Day Itinerary to the Eight Great Places

Outbound Flight KL/Delhi, return Flight Calcutta/KL.
Land Route as per suggested itinerary below:

Day	Schedule	Overnight
1	KL/Delhi (*flight*)	Delhi
2	Delhi/Etawah (*Shatabdhi Express train*), Etawah/Sankasia/Kanpur (*coach*)	Kanpur
3	Kanpur/Sravasti/Balrampur	Balrampur
4	Balrampur/Kapilavatthu/Lumbini	Lumbini
5	Lumbini/Kushinagar	Kushinagar
6	Kushinagar/Sarnath/Varanasi	Varanasi
7	Varanasi/Bodhgaya	Bodhgaya
8	Bodhgaya (*whole day*)	Bodhgaya
9	Bodhgaya/Rajgir/Nalanda/Patna	Patna
10	Patna/Vaishali/Patna, Overnight train to Calcutta	Train
11	Arrive Calcutta, City Tour, Calcutta/KL (*flight*)	Plane
12	Arrive KLIA	Home

3. *Performing Dana or Offerings to the Sangha*

As D-day, or departure day, approaches the pilgrim will naturally experience **great joy** and **religious excitement** at the prospect of actually journeying to the land where the Buddha and the *Arahants* lived and preached more than 2,500 years ago. For Malaysian Buddhists, who are well known for their **generosity**, the desire to **perform** ***dana*** will prompt the pilgrims and their well-wishers to donate generously towards the purchase of **monks' requisites** for offering to the Buddhist monasteries located in the vicinity of all the holy shrines. Many of the monks in these monasteries, notably those from **Sri Lanka** and **Myanmar**, have spent the major part of their lives in India. They are dedicated to the **safeguarding of** the holy shrines and **reviving** the traditions of ***Vaisakha Purnima*** (***Wesak)*** and ***Kathina*** (robe offering after the rains-retreat) in the land where Buddhism was born but had disappeared for six hundred years after its downfall in the 13^{th} century AD. Their presence at the holy shrines has helped to keep these shrines '**alive**', so that pilgrims who come from far and wide can benefit from their **advice** and **help**. By performing *dana* to these *bhikkhus,* one expresses one's **gratitude**, **reverence** and **loving-kindness** to the *Sangha,* for its role in safeguarding these holy places for future generations of Buddhists to come and "look upon them with feelings of reverence", in accordance with the Buddha's advice.

For pilgrims travelling in a group, there is less restriction on luggage weight during group check-in at the airport. This provides them with the opportunity to bring items such as monks' robes, towels, medicines, multi-vitamins, writing materials for student-monks, foodstuffs and other requisites not obtainable in India and

offer them to the *Sangha*. Money remaining after the purchase of requisites may be converted into Indian rupees and placed into the donation boxes of the monasteries during the visits, so that the money may be used for the maintenance of the monasteries and the *bhikkhus*.

4. *Information and Tips on Travel in India*

a) *Travel Visas*

Pilgrims who intend visiting the Buddhist circuit by flight in and out of India should ensure that they hold a **multiple entry visa** for India. An ordinary tourist visa for single entry will not allow the visitor to re-enter India from Nepal after visiting **Lumbini**. Nowadays one can apply for both Indian and Nepalese visas in Kuala Lumpur.

b) *Insurance and Expenses*

- Pilgrims are advised to **insure themselves** against loss/sickness/accident during the journey.

- Pilgrims should **exercise care and precaution** to safeguard their luggage and belongings. They should **not bring** jewelry, expensive watches and other valuables on the journey.

- They should keep their passports and cash with them at all times, as the loss of a passport will cause a lot of inconvenience to everyone.

- ***What is the minimum amount of money to bring along?***

  As all expenses for the trip – such as the tour fare, airport taxes, visa fees, entrance fees and tips – have been paid before departure, one need not bring a lot of money for the journey. Overall, **US$100** is sufficient to cover all personal expenses such as purchasing souvenirs and donations to the various temples. Of course, one may bring more money if one wishes.

c) *Health Precautions*

- To **avoid sickness**, one should always drink boiled/mineral water and not consume any uncooked food, not even **iced drinks**, as the ice is made from tap water. Arrangements may be made with the travel agent to provide one bottle of mineral water per day to each pilgrim free of charge.

- **Inoculation against Cholera:** Those who wish to inoculate against cholera should do it 2-3 weeks before departure to avoid developing a fever while travelling.

- **Medicines:** A first aid kit containing normal medicines for cuts, sprains, diarrhea, flu, food poisoning, ointment for insect bites, Panadol for fever, etc. should be brought along to cater for emergencies. Costs may be shared by members of the group.

d) *Things to bring along*

Important: In view of the strict security checks when boarding an airplane, please ensure that **no sharp objects** are carried in your hand carry luggage. The following are useful on a short tour:

- Torchlight in case of emergency/power failure in the hotel.
- Warm clothes for mild winter, e.g. sweater, jacket, pants for ladies.
- For shoes, wear walking or jogging shoes and socks.
- Umbrella – foldable type for ladies.
- Toilet articles, tissues, shampoo, washing powder.
- Dry foodstuffs, e.g. biscuits, sweets, coffee or tea sachets, fast-cooking noodles, etc.
- It is good to carry multi-vitamins for personal use.

e) *Donations to Charity*

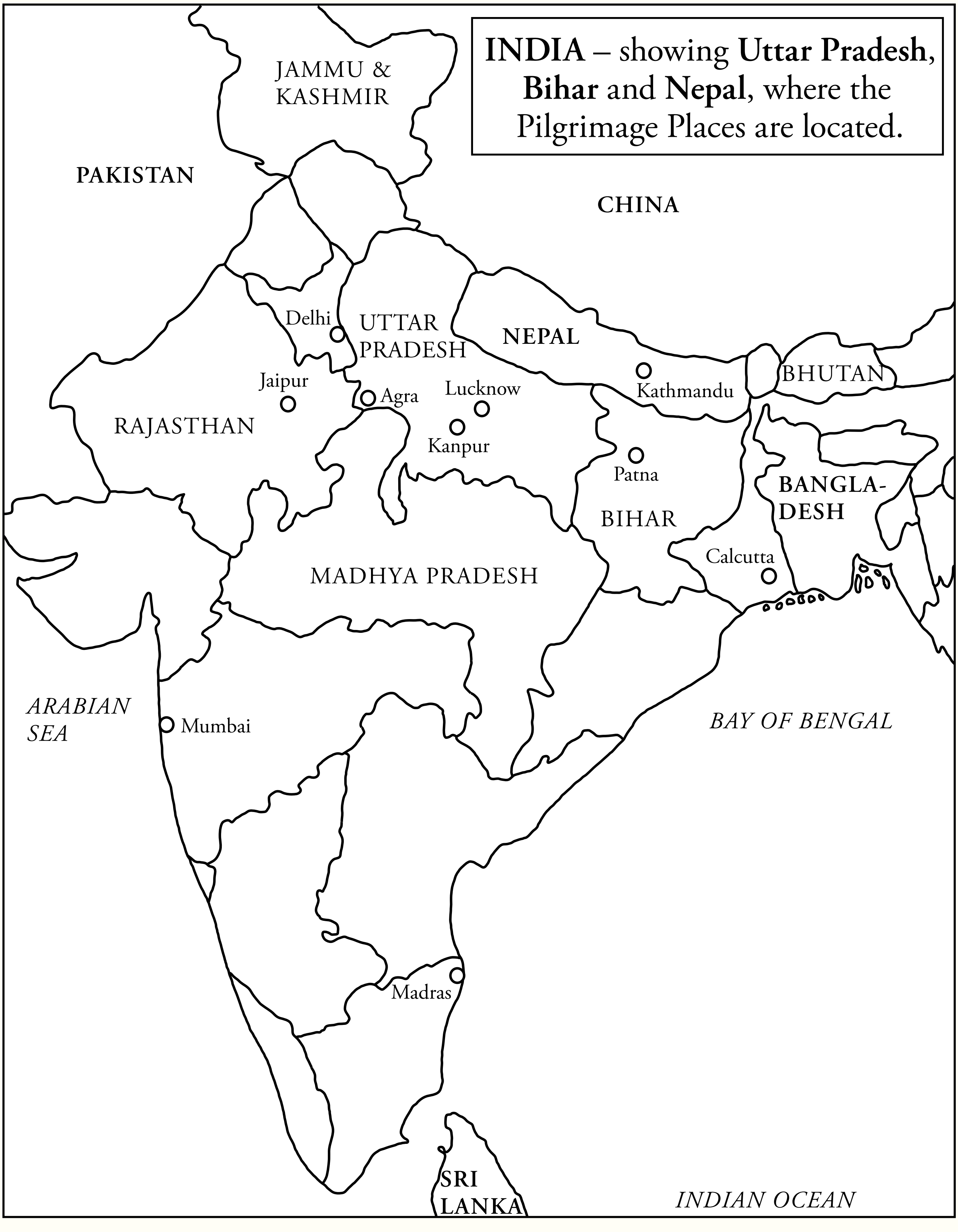
Begging appears to be a **profession** in India and even village children enjoy begging from visitors at the first opportunity. By giving to one beggar, one will find oneself being swarmed by a crowd of beggars asking for more, and generally making a **nuisance** of themselves. In giving charity to the poor, it is advisable to give all donations in cash and kind to the **monasteries** for **fair distribution**. One may bring ballpoint pens, sweets, old clothes, etc. and donate them to the Maha Bodhi Society branches in Sarnath and Bodhgaya, which provide free education to the poor children in their areas.

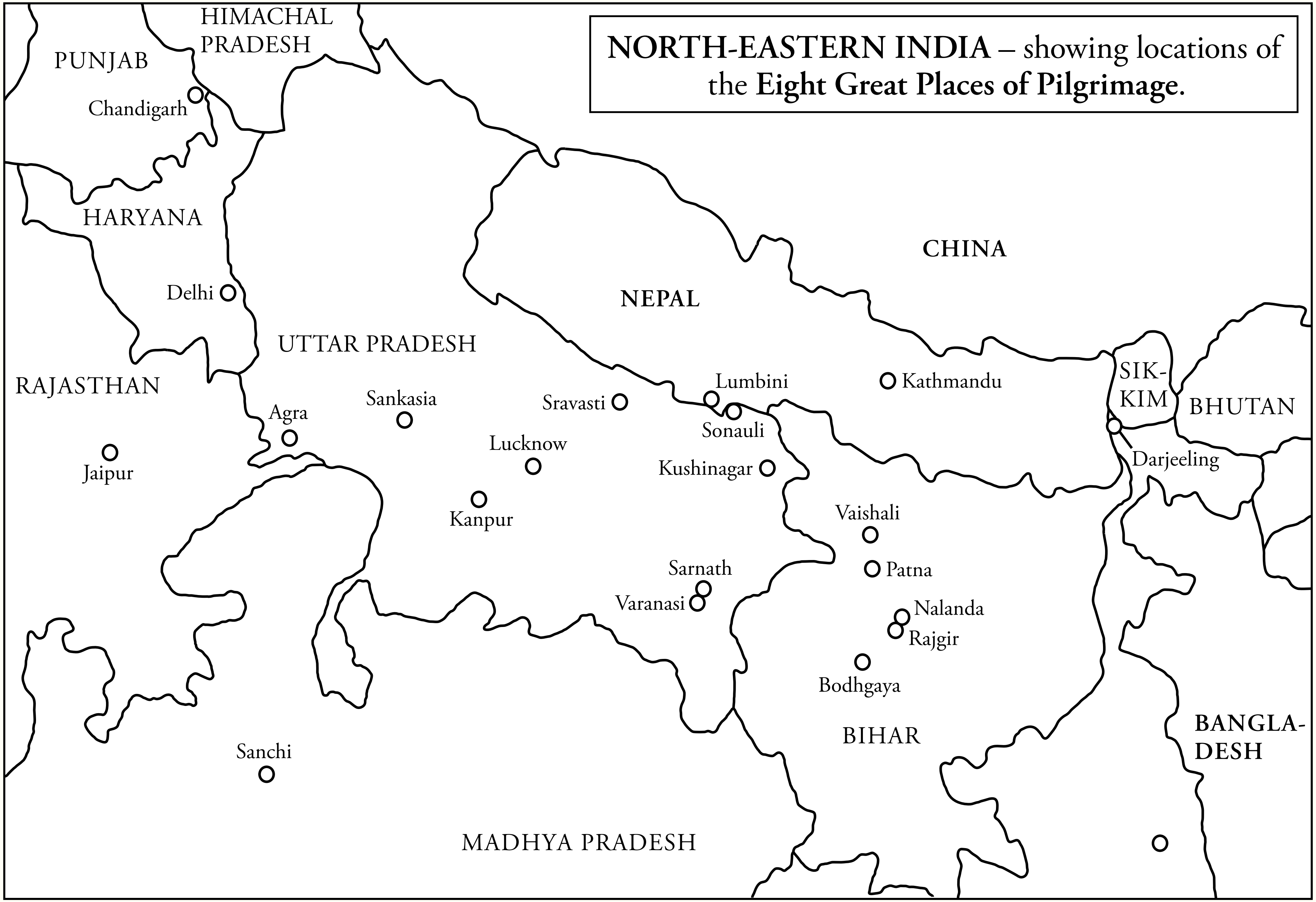
5. *Distances by Road between the Pilgrimage Places –*

From		To	Km
Delhi	–	Agra	200
Agra	–	Sankasia	175
Etawah	–	Sankasia	90
Sankasia	–	Kanpur	220
Kanpur	–	Lucknow	88
Lucknow	–	Sravasti	160
Sravasti	–	Kushinagar	250
Sravasti	–	Lumbini	210
Lumbini	–	Kapilavastu	27
Lumbini	–	Kushinagar	130
Kushinagar	–	Sarnath	250
Kushinagar	–	Vaishali	200
Sarnath	–	Bodhgaya	250
Bodhgaya	–	Rajgir	70
Rajgir	–	Nalanda	15
Nalanda	–	Patna	90
Patna	–	Bodhgaya	105
Patna	–	Vaishali	55
Bodhgaya	–	Calcutta	490

6. *Maps showing Locations of the Pilgrimage Places*

(**Note**: Locations of place names on maps are indicative only.)





NORTH-EASTERN INDIA – showing locations of the **Eight Great Places of Pilgrimage**.

7. *Pilgrimage Groups from 1991-2001*

Since 1991, the writer has organised four pilgrimages to India and many Buddhists in the Klang Valley have undertaken the journeys of piety and faith. The names of members who made up the pilgrimage groups are given below to help them remember their fellow pilgrims and the happy moments spent at the holy places. An important factor that contributed to the success of the pilgrimages was the reliable service offered by the tour agent at reasonable tour fares.

a) *11 Days Nepal/India Pilgrimage: 15-25 Nov 1991*

Travel Agent: Keris Travel & Tours (KL) Sdn. Bhd., Lot 2.3 & 2.7, 2nd Floor, Kompleks Selangor, Jalan Sultan, 50000 Kuala Lumpur.

Ven. Sayadaw U Jnanapurnik, Sister Uppalavanna, Dr. Wong Wai Cheong, Mr. Chan Khoon San, Mr. Tan Su Hah, Mr. Lim Boon Hang, Mr. Tan Boon Chhai, Mr. Lim Liang Guan, Mdm. Tan Kooi Chin, Ms. Tan Poh Em, Mdm. Lim Yew Choo, Mdm. Yeo Peck Hoon, Mdm. Teh Swee See, Mdm. Ng Kooi Meng, Mdm. Ler Siew Khwai, Mr. Kweh Kim Swee, Ms. Lye Kwai Ying, Ms. Saw Hong Poh, Ms. Hoe Soon Ying, Mdm. Wong Yuit Mooi, Ms. Ng Keh Eng, Ms. Chuah Chew Hing.

b) *15 Days Sri Lanka/India Pilgrimage: 21 Nov-5 Dec 1997*

Travel Agent: Mr. Terence Chong, Ameriasa Tours & Travel Sdn. Bhd., 9-2B, 2nd Floor, Jalan Pandan 2/2, Pandan Jaya, 55100 Kuala Lumpur. Tel: 03-92839920. Fax: 03-92838526.

Ven. B. Saranankara Thero, Ven. Sayadaw U Rewata, Mr. Chan Khoon San, Mr. Chen Kok Chin, Mr. Chan Weng Poh, Mr. Lee Fan Kiat, Mr. Wu Chee Meng, Mr. Tan Su Hah, Mr. Loh Kok Yong, Mr. Ooi Chin Chye, Mdm. Tan Lei Hong, Mdm. Wong Hee Leong, Ms. Loo May Lin, Mdm. Lim Eng Lian, Mdm. Hong Kim Choo, Ms. Tan Kok Yee, Mdm. Cheoh Siew Cheng, Mdm. Kee Phaik Ean, Mr. Wong Fok Gee, Mdm. Tay Seok Im, Mr. Too Yewn Hiang, Mdm. Tan Ming Tin, Mr. Yap Pak Choong, Mdm. Goh Siew Khim, Mr. Chey Shaw, Mdm. Huang Saw Heen, Mr. Chiu Sheng Bin, Mdm. Tan Lean Cheoh, Mr. Lim Peng Lai, Mdm. Lian Kai Hong, Mr. Lam Cheok Yew, Mdm. Tay Mo Lee, Mdm. Lam Kwai Eng, Ms. Lam Hui Peng, Mr. Lam Siew Mun, Mr. Khong Kok Keong.

c) *12 Days India Pilgrimage: 31 Oct-11 Nov 1999*

Travel Agent: Mr. Terence Chong, Ameriasa Tours & Travel Sdn. Bhd., Lumpur. Tel: 03-92839920. Fax: 03-92838526.

Ven. Sayadaw U Rewata, Mr. Chan Khoon San, Mr. Cheong Chee Kwong, Mr. Ng Tom Sing, Mr. Teh Kok Lai, Mr. Wong Suk Chin, Mr. Loh Cheng Kee, Mr. Tang Hau Seng, Mr. Tang Weng Yew, Mdm. Ang Guar Gor, Mdm. Lim Cheng Suan, Mdm. Chou Cheng Phaik, Ms. Tan Qui Ying, Mdm. Lim Sook Liew, Mdm.

Foo Choon Sim, Mdm. Yap Sew Hong, Mdm. Wooi Kheng Choo, Mdm. Ong Guat Eng, Mdm. Cheah Suan Cheng, Mdm. Ng Yoke Moy, Ms. Kieu Choon Lai, Mdm. Lim Lai Sun.

d) *12 Days India Pilgrimage: 27 Oct-7 Nov 2001*

Travel Agent: Mr. Terence Chong, Ameriasa Tours & Travel Sdn. Bhd., Lumpur. Tel: 03-92839920. Fax: 03-92838526.

Ven. Sayadaw U Rewata, Mr. Chan Khoon San, Mr. Chiu Sheng Bin, Mdm. Tan Lei Hong, Mdm. Tan Jok Hong, Mr. Ng Swee Aun, Mdm. Lee Mee Fong, Ms. Ng Hui Wen, Mdm. Lee Suat Yee, Mdm. Tan Yew Kim, Mr. Soo Khoon York, Mdm. Chia Wai Kee.

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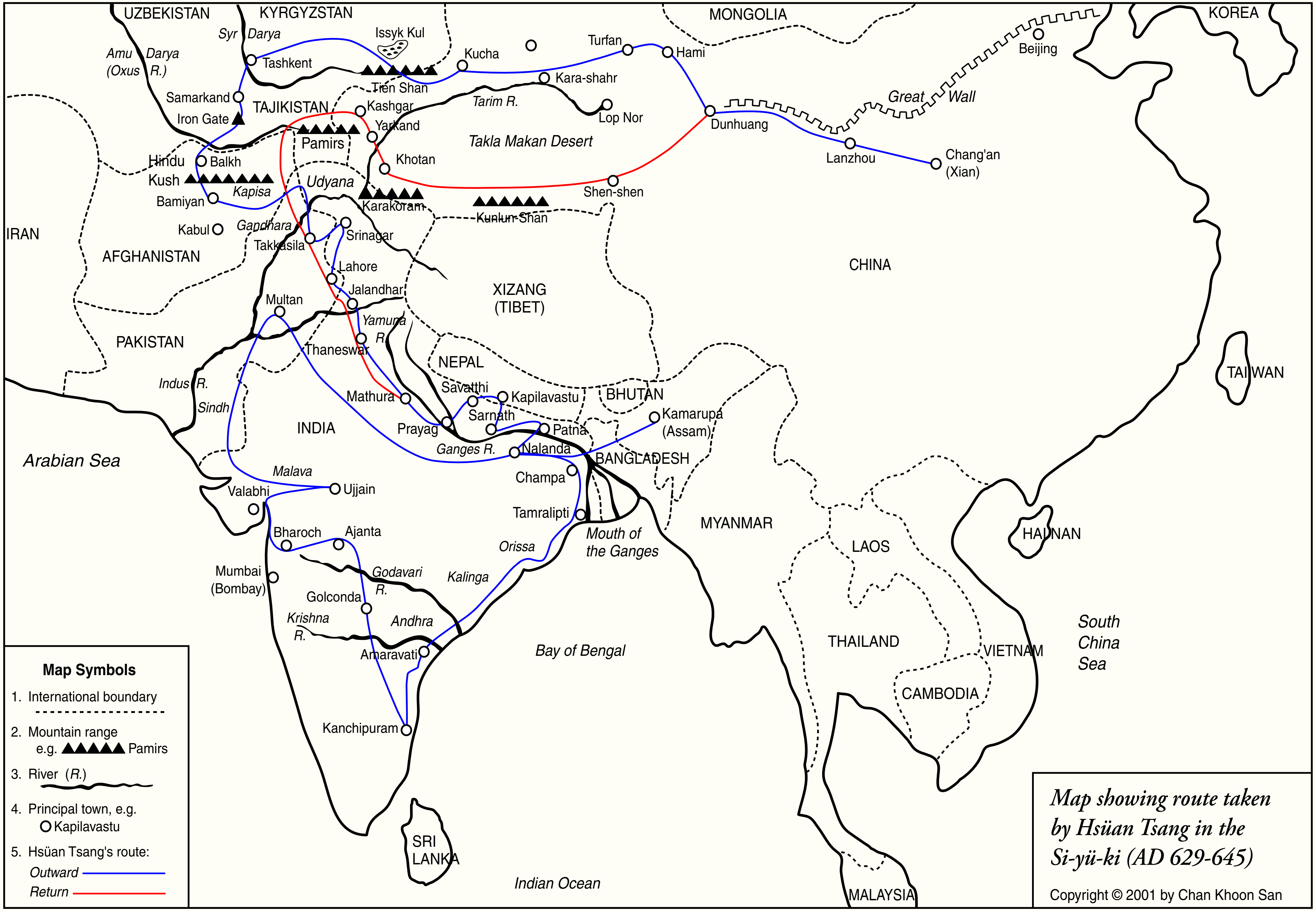
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Map showing route taken by Hsüan Tsang in the Si-yü-ki (AD 629-645)